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# STORIES FROM THE OLD FRENCH CHRONICLES

*Retold in Modern English by*  
**ROBERT D. BENEDICT**



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## *PREFACE*

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**T**IME to read as much as I would like having been given to me in later years, I took up several of the French Chroniclers who have told of events in France in the 14th to the 17th centuries, from the day of King Charles IV and Du Guesclin to that of Louis XIV and De Pontis. Some of these chroniclers wrote biographies, some autobiographies, some histories, some journals. I found in them many episodes, interesting or amusing, whose full details perhaps made them inappropriate for the pages of the historian. Of these I have selected for translation the seventeen which follow, —I have thought they would not only be interesting as stories, but as giving, to those who read them, views of the life and manners of the camp and court of the time, given at first hand by writers, who took part in, or had personal knowledge of the events. And that a story teller can say, "All this I knew and part of this I was," always gives to his tale an added interest.

I have not changed or made addition, except



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*Preface*

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where it was necessary to do so, to make the tale intelligible. I have made the translations as simple as I could, in order to give to the reader not only the story, but also, as far as mere translation can give it, an idea of the style and therefore of the storyteller, for "the style is the man."

I hope those, who read the stories, may find them as interesting as they have been to me, remembering that what they are reading is not a work of imagination, but a narrative of actual fact.

R. D. B.

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*STORIES FROM THE  
OLD FRENCH CHRONICLES*



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*THE SIEGE OF RENNES, OR  
HOW THE DUKE WAS ENABLED TO  
KEEP HIS OATH*

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**I**N the year 1355, the Duke of Lancaster besieged Rennes and took an oath that he would not leave it till he had entered the city. Rennes was held for Duke Charles of Blois by *Lame de Pennehoet*, who was a chevalier of great prowess and great sense. *Bertrand du Guesclin*, who had relatives in Rennes, wished much to be in the city, but the Duke had besieged it so closely on all sides, that no help of men or provisions could enter. So *Bertrand*, with about sixty companions, remained in the great woods which were near Rennes, and by day and night attacked the Duke's men, shouting, "*Guesclin!*" The Duke marvelled at this, and inquired who it was that waked up his host so often. There was there a chevalier of Brittany who said to the Duke, "I swear to you that he is a young man of twenty years of age, of good parentage, who has some young people in company with him; and, young as he is, he has done as many feats of arms

as any chevalier of this country has ever done.” Then he told the Duke how Bertrand had taken the castle of Forgeray and had taken his name from that. Then the Duke said that, as he had taken the castle, he might well claim to be the Sire de Forgeray, and that he wished he was somewhere else.

The Duke made great assaults upon Rennes, but he lost more than he gained in them. And so he began to mine the walls. Thereupon de Pennehoet, who suspected it, ordered that, in order to find out the mine, every one should keep in his house basins or pans of brass with bits of iron in them, by the rattle of which, from the jar of the digging underground, they found where the mine was and began a countermine.

Bertrand learned of the mine and was greatly troubled; and one night he and his companions rode into the camp of the Duke and set fire to some tents, and raised such a shout that the Englishmen thought that they were attacked by the French of the party of Charles of Blois. In that attack Bertrand took four chevaliers prisoners and let them go on parole, and then he retreated into the forest. But the Englishmen remained under arms all night long, till the sentinels in the morning came and reported

that there was no attacking force; and then the Duke thought and said that it was Bertrand who would not let them sleep. Then came one of the English prisoners, whom Bertrand had sent to the Duke, and said, "Bertrand, whose prisoner I am, has sent me to say to you that it was he, who gave you the wake-up last night, and that henceforward he will let you sleep, if you will let him and his companions enter into Rennes, for he wishes much to see his relatives who are there." But the Duke was very wrathful, and answered that he would give no truce for that purpose. And he pressed more strongly the mining of the wall.

But the men of Rennes countermined till they broke into the English mine; and there was a long fight in the mine. But at last the English were discomfited and driven out and the mine was ruined. The Duke, when he heard of it, was in great wrath. So he held the siege still closer, so that those of Rennes could receive neither help nor provisions. And the Duke knew well that there was a great lack of meat in Rennes; but the men of Rennes would make no sortie. So the Duke thought of a scheme to get the garrison to come outside the walls. He collected about two thousand swine, and put



them to pasture in the meadows near the wall of the city. And the men of Rennes wanted to come out and seize the swine, but the captain would not allow it. And he thought of a trick to meet that of the Duke. He sent for a butcher and told him to bring a sow near the drawbridge. Then he lowered the bridge and just inside the wall he had the butcher stick the sow, which squealed loudly. And when the herd of swine heard it, they began to squeal too and ran there, and nothing could stop them from running into the city, and in such a crush that not an Englishman dared set foot on the bridge. And so the men of Rennes got the Duke's swine, at which he was vexed enough. But they were greatly pleased for they had been without meat for a long time and would have been still longer, because the Duke of Lancaster had taken an oath for the siege, and every day the supplies in Rennes grew less, and they had seen no help on any side.

Then de Pennehoet called the leaders of Rennes together to consider how they could get help from Duke Charles of Blois, who was at Nantes, but was a prisoner on parole, and therefore could not take up arms. There came to them one of the citizens, who had six children and nothing for them, and he

said, "Seigneurs! if you please, I will venture as I shall tell you; that is, I will go to the Duke of Lancaster and will say to him that you have banished me and seized my property. And I will tell him that help is going to come to you from France very soon, and that the French force plans to make a secret attack, and that they are to come from Nantes; and I will show him the way that they must come. And if by means of this I can then escape from the English, I will go to Nantes to tell Duke Charles of Blois what straits we are in. But I ask you to take care of my children."

The men of Rennes agreed to this and they made a sally against the English, in which the citizen of Rennes slipped aside, and succeeded in coming to the Duke of Lancaster, and said to him, "Ah! Monseigneur! What a hard time it will be, if Rennes holds out like this. Monseigneur! it is true that I am from Rennes, but those who are in Rennes have banished me and killed my six children and seized my property. And so I am trying to go to Nantes, hoping to have pity from the Duke who has paid no attention to Rennes. Monseigneur! you have been here a long time; but if you do not look out, you will not be here much longer. For,

by my faith, tomorrow you will have on your hands a French force, which has secretly started from Nantes to attack you. And they are coming by two different ways, so as to surprise you at two different points." So the Duke, on this news, set his men in array to receive the French. And those who were in Rennes made bonfires, and made the musicians play on the walls of the city, and made a great semblance of rejoicing about something.

The citizen of Rennes succeeded in escaping from the English camp and took his way towards Nantes. The next morning he found on his way Bertrand and his companions, who were coming to spy out the English host. Bertrand knew the man, and he told Bertrand how it was with those in Rennes, and what he had told the Duke of Lancaster. That morning the Duke rode out on the road towards Nantes, hoping to meet the French. At his headquarters he left tents and carts and provisions and a party to guard. But Bertrand attacked it, crying his war-cry of "Guesclin," and the English put themselves on the defense. And when the garrison saw that Bertrand was fighting with the English, they made a sally to help him, and the English were discomfited and the tents of the Duke and the carts

and the provisions were carried into the city, to the great joy of his relatives and of the whole city.

The Duke of Lancaster soon heard of this and saw that he had been deceived in this and was very angry. So he held the siege about Rennes closer and closer. When Bertrand had entered Rennes, he set free without ransom the foreign merchants who were among his prisoners, who had brought supplies to the English host, making the men of Rennes pay them for the supplies which they had and which he had captured with them. But he made them promise that they would bring no more supplies to the Duke of Lancaster's army. Then he sent them to the Duke with a polite message from him, which they gave to the Duke. He was very much pleased, and said that so generous a heart could do no evil deed, and that Bertrand surpassed all the chevaliers in the world, and he wished much that he could see him. The Count of Pembroke, who was with him, said to him, "I advise you to send a safe-conduct to Bertrand with an invitation, and I know him so well that I am sure he will come." So the Duke sent a herald to Rennes and invited Bertrand to visit him with three others, for whom he sent a safe-conduct.

So the herald came into Rennes and addressed the captain and asked for Bertrand. He was just coming up the street, clad in a black doublet which made no show, and carrying an axe on his shoulder; and the captain pointed him out to the herald. And the herald said, "Saint Mary! captain, he looks like a brigand in that array." And the captain said, "My friend, I advise you to speak courteously to him, for otherwise you will get nothing of him." So the captain called Bertrand; and the herald saluted him in the name of the Duke, and courteously said to him, "Sir, the Duke of Lancaster sends me to you! He has heard so much good of you, that he much desires to see you; and therefore he asks that you and three others would kindly come to see him in his quarters. Wherefore take this safe-conduct which he sends to you by me."

So Bertrand gave the herald a hundred francs, for which the herald thanked him much, and he went to pay the visit to the Duke. When the English heard of the coming of Bertrand, they came out of their tents and pavilions to see him pass. And he came to the Duke's tent and knelt very humbly before him. And the Duke at once raised him and thanked him very much for coming at his invitation.

The Duke held a long conversation with Bertrand and saw plainly by what he said that there was great bravery in him. So he wished much to draw him to his side; and he asked him who was his seigneur. "Sire," said Bertrand, "you know well enough. You know that it is Monseigneur Charles of Blois, who, by right of his wife, holds the Duchy of Brittany."

"My friend Bertrand," answered the Duke, "Charles does not yet hold the Duchy of Brittany. And before he could hold it a hundred thousand men would have to die, which would be a pity."

Bertrand replied quickly, "I well believe that enough men will be killed. But at least the property will be left for those that remain."

The Duke smiled at that, and said to Bertrand, "If you will enter my service, I will make you a chevalier and I will give you land enough to maintain your station well."

When Bertrand heard this he thought a little and said, "Sire, I would to God that there was a good peace between you princes. For truly if there was peace, especially with Monseigneur Duke Charles, whom I serve, I would be glad to do as you wish. But, Sire, if I had been in your service and then

should have left it to serve another, who was opposed to you, you would hold me for a traitor and disloyal, which must never happen." The Duke esteemed Bertrand highly for that reply; and he had wine and spices brought, with which the chevaliers were served.

There was at that time in the English army William Brambrock, brother of Robert Brambrock, who had been killed when Bertrand took the Castle of Forgeray. He came before Bertrand and demanded of him a joust of three spear strokes. Bertrand said he would give him that or one of six strokes, if he was not content with three. The Duke smiled and said that Bertrand had given a proud answer. Then he said to them, "Fair sirs, since you please to have this joust in my presence, I wish it to be held tomorrow." Then came the herald to the Duke and said, "Sire, I must thank you for the courtesy and largess which Bertrand showed me, for to your honor he gave me a great present." The Duke was much pleased with Bertrand for that, and thanked him much and ordered the best courser he had to be brought and gave it to Bertrand. And Bertrand said to him, "Sire, you are the first prince that ever made a gift to me. I am a poor

man and cannot serve you, but I swear to you that I would willingly serve you in every case, saving my honor. The courser is fine and I thank you for it, and tomorrow I will make a trial of it in your presence." And then Bertrand took leave of the Duke and went back into the city.

The next morning early he confessed and heard mass, and then he armed himself and went to the quarters of the Duke of Lancaster; and the Count of Pembroke was to keep the field. And shortly Brambrock came in and afterward Bertrand. They mounted their horses and ran against each other with great force. And the first course they struck each other's helmets; and Brambrock was much hurt, but Bertrand was not, though he was dazed by the blow. They ran the two other courses but without any wound on either side. Then Bertrand was much vexed and he said to the Chevalier Brambrock, "I have done what you requested and for the honor of Monseigneur the Duke, who is there, I have spared you; but if you want any more, more you shall have." Brambrock took his words in great dudgeon and said that he required as much again. So Bertrand agreed, and the joust began again, and with the first lance Bertrand struck Brambrock



with such force that his armor gave way and the iron of the spear struck through his body and he fell dead on the field. Bertrand took his horse, and came before the Duke to thank him and said, "Sire! I came here with one horse and I go away with two, thanks to you." Then the Duke's herald came there, and when Bertrand saw him he gave him the horse which he had won in the joust, for which the Duke and his chivalry held him in great honor. And then Bertrand went back into Rennes, and there he was honorably received and feasted that day; but about vespers, the Duke made an assault on the city, and the English brought up a tall tower very close to the walls. When night came the assault drew off, but the Duke put men-at-arms and cross-bow men in the tower to keep it, hoping in the morning to begin the assault there again. But at daylight, as Bertrand advised, de Pennehoet and Bertrand and a great number of men of Rennes sallied out and assailed the tower and killed the guard, and burned the tower with Greek fire. And the English host assailed them fiercely, but they defended themselves retreating, so that without loss they got back into Rennes.

Now winter approached and the Duke and the

English were much worn by the siege which had lasted so long; and the Duke would have willingly raised the siege, but that he had sworn that he would not leave it till he had placed his pennon over the gate of the city. In the city they were in a great trouble, by reason of the great diminution of provisions; and Bertrand knew well the oath that the Duke had taken. So Bertrand had the chevaliers and barons, who were in Rennes, called together by his advice, and it was resolved that if the Duke of Lancaster, he and nine others only, would come into Rennes, they would open the gates to him, and that in order to keep his oath he might plant his pennon over the gates, but then he must raise the siege. Bertrand sent word to the Duke, who received it pleasantly and asked three days to consider it. Some of the English chevaliers advised the Duke to do nothing of the kind, unless the city was put at his command, for that they knew well the city was starving. But the Duke determined that he would go into Rennes, he and nine others, and would ride through the city, and he would act according to what he saw. And the day was agreed upon. And the day before that, by Bertrand's orders, notice was given through the city that next day every one

should be under arms, and that all provisions, bread, grain, meat and fish should be displayed on the stalls and in the windows of the city. And on the day set, the Duke and nine others, chevaliers, came; and the captain and Bertrand met him and took him through the city. And when the Duke saw all the provisions which there were on the stalls and the men who were in arms throughout the city, he sent a herald to his headquarters to get his banners and pennons, which were quickly brought. And the Duke went up over the gate at Rennes and planted his banners there and then came down; and they brought him wine which he drank and then went out of the city. And as soon as he was on the outer side of the bridge, those, who were over the gate of the city, threw his banners after him, which so vexed the Duke that he was sorry he had made the agreement. But still, in order to keep his word, he raised the siege, since he could now do it without breaking his oath, and retired to the castle of Auroy and passed the winter there.

After the siege was raised, Duke Charles of Blois came to Rennes and there learned all that Bertrand had done and all his bravery, and held him very highly prized therefor.

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## *THE DOG DID IT*

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**I**N the year 1388, Charles VI was King of France. Difficulties in the government of the municipality of the city of Paris had arisen, to remedy which the King created a new office of Provost of the Merchants, to which he appointed a lawyer, called Master Jean Juvenal des Ursins. He took up an investigation of the business affairs of the city which he found had been much neglected, and succeeded in putting them on a much better footing, and thereby brought himself into high favor in the city. And for several years he showed himself a faithful, upright and intelligent officer, and as says the chronicler, "He governed himself so well in his office that he had the love and favor of the King and of all the people, as well the church people as the nobles, the merchants and the commonalty," so that his influence and power in the court increased greatly. In 1392, the King was struck by a seizure of insanity which at intervals recurred during the rest of his life. This condition of the King's health, even in his lucid

intervals, had a very injurious effect upon the public affairs, and the wisdom of Des Ursins was availed of frequently in the effort to remedy difficulties and heal dissensions in the court. For as a matter of course, there were those who sought to take advantage of such a disturbed condition of affairs and to fish in the troubled waters. They found a powerful opposition to their schemes in the influence of Des Ursins. Some honored and prized him for the good work, which he was doing, but the hostility of those whose schemes of personal advantage he was thwarting, was thereby made more bitter, and they entered upon a scheme for his ruin. The Duke of Burgundy was known to be hostile to Des Ursins, who had before that time thwarted him in a purpose to ruin two of Des Ursins' friends, and to the Duke they went with false tales that he had spoken ill of the Duke and others, and had done various things worthy of punishment. The Duke listened to them very gladly and believed their stories. He had them put in writing and given to two commissioners of the criminal court to take depositions and prepare on them an information against Des Ursins before the commissioners. The conspirators produced some thirty witnesses, who had been carefully drilled, so

that their stories, though false, agreed upon the surface. And on a Thursday after dinner the commissioners came to the Duke and told him that the information was prepared and the document only needed to be engrossed. The Duke was in haste and he told them that there was no need of engrossing the papers, and that they must be taken to the King's attorney-general, that he might be ready on the following Saturday morning to present the case against Des Ursins before the King and his Council. But the attorney-general on being applied to, either because he had had intimations that the matter was a trumped up affair, or that he was friendly to Des Ursins, flatly refused to have anything to do with the matter, which was therefore put in the hands of an advocate of the parliament, named Andriquet, who agreed to present the case on the Saturday morning to the King and council. The commissioners then informed the Duke that everything was ready, and he arranged to have Des Ursins summoned to appear at the appointed time. The commissioners left the presence of the Duke in high good humor, for he had not only expressed his satisfaction with what they had done, but had paid them well. A good dinner seemed to them a

most appropriate thing, and they were soon established before a table in a hostelry, on one side of which table they had laid their bundle of papers so that it should not incommode them in their pleasant occupation. The dinner was good and the wine was good, and they did not spare it, until at last their heads became muddled; and a sharp discussion having arisen between them and some of the frequenters of the place, one of the commissioners emphasized his statements by such blows on the table that the bundle of papers fell to the floor. In the heat of the discussion neither of them noticed its fall, and the innkeeper's puppy, frolicking around the room, thought it was thrown down for him to play with; and seizing it in his mouth he ran into the innkeeper's bedroom, the door of which was open, and dragged it under the bed, where, finding it too heavy for a satisfactory plaything, he left it. The hour waxed late, the hour for closing arrived and the muddle-headed commissioners staggered out and betook themselves to their respective quarters, each of them, when the bundle of papers occurred to him, saying to himself that his fellow had it. The innkeeper also went to bed, and his wife, who out of deference to her lord and master

slept on the backside of the bed, which was pulled a little way from the wall, was seeking her proper place, when she stubbed her toe on an unexpected object. Her outcry startled her husband to whom she explained that she had hit something, which she, stooping, picked up and gave to him. He, seeing that it was a bundle of papers, opened it and to his amazement, found that it contained an information charging various crimes upon Provost Des Ursins, and depositions in support of it. He held the Provost in high regard, and he at once appreciated the importance of his discovery. So up he rose and donned his clothes, and hastened with his prize to the Hotel de Ville, where, on his earnest representations, he was admitted to the presence of the Provost, who rose from his bed to give him audience, for it was about midnight. The innkeeper exhibited the papers, and explained how the wine which the commissioners had drunk and the antic of his dog, and the stubbing of his wife's toe had put him in possession of them. The Provost thanked him most warmly for the service rendered, and the innkeeper returned home having been warned to keep silence about the matter, and the Provost, having made himself familiar with the papers, returned to



his bed to wait for the explosion of the mine which the papers disclosed, and against which he was made, by this accident, able to countermine. He did not have long to wait, for before he got up in the morning an officer came to summon him to appear before the King and his council at 9 o'clock on the following Saturday morning. The Duke and his followers were so sure of their success that they arranged the prison in which the Provost should be at once shut up, and the report was spread, to the astonishment of everybody, that the Provost was in danger of losing his head.

At the appointed time Des Ursins appeared but not alone, for he was accompanied by three or four hundred of the best citizens of Paris, and somewhat to the surprise of his opponents he did not seem to be at all disturbed. Andriquet set forth to the King the charges which had been made against the Provost and supported by witnesses and on which an information had been presented, as he said, for various crimes of which Des Ursins had thus been shown to be guilty. When Andriquet ceased, Des Ursins rose to speak, but Andriquet objected. He said the matter was so serious that it should go before a high tribunal, before which Des Ursins would have

his opportunity to be heard, and meanwhile he should be put in prison and held there till such hearing could be had. But the King closed the discussion by saying that he would hear the Provost. Des Ursins then took up the various charges, denying each of them and claiming that they had been trumped up against him, and adding that against an officer of the King no proceeding could be taken except by information, and notwithstanding what Master Andriquet had said, he did not believe that any information had been drawn or any depositions had been taken against him. Andriquet, with a smile of superiority, said he would soon show that what he had said was true, and turning to the commissioners who stood behind him said, "Give me the papers." Hasty whispers passed between them. "You have got them." "No! I have not." "You must have them," until with faces of dismay they were obliged to say that they did not have the papers and did not know what had become of them. The King, who watched their embarrassment with amusement, waited until Andriquet in great embarrassment admitted that he could not produce any information or depositions, and he then pronounced his sentence in the affair.

"I decide that my Provost is an upright man and those who have set up these things are bad people."

And turning to Des Ursins he said, "You may go, my friend. And you too, my good citizens."

The rage of the conspirators and the dismay of the commissioners may be imagined. Their dismay extended to the witnesses, who perceived the favor in which Des Ursins was held by the King, and when told by the commissioners that they must come again and testify as they did before, they flatly refused and said that the King had decided that Des Ursins was an upright man, and they would do nothing further against him. The false witnesses could not help considering that the Provost, if he had knowledge of what they had done, might make things serious for them, and they took counsel together as to how to guard themselves from that danger. They concluded that, if any such proceedings were begun, they would be in a better position, if they could appear as being penitent for the sin they had committed in perjuring themselves, and as having been absolved for that by authority of the church. So they went to a priest and in confession told him what they had done and begged to be absolved from their sins. But the priest easily perceived that it

was not an ordinary case of awakened consciences, and he refused to absolve them, telling them they must go to the Bishop of Paris. They did so, but the bishop also told them that their case was so bad and important that he did not dare to give them absolution; and he advised them to go to Cardinal de Luna, who was then in Paris as legate from the pope. To the cardinal they went, and he being, as legate, not as apprehensive of running counter to the Provost as had been the priest and the bishop, heard their confession and gave them absolution, but he laid upon them as a penance that on the morning of Good Friday, they must all appear naked before Des Ursins' gate, acknowledge their fault and beg his forgiveness.

"But," said they, "if we appear there naked he will recognize us."

So the cardinal gave them permission to have their heads wrapped up to conceal their faces.

When Des Ursins, on the morning of Good Friday, went out of his gate to go to early church, he found before him an astonishing spectacle of some thirty men, naked except that their heads were covered so as to hide their faces, who cried for mercy. To his inquiry as to what they wanted mercy for, one of

them, who had been selected as spokesman, told him that they were those who had testified against him, and that their stories had been false, and that having confessed their sin in the matter they had been absolved from it, but with this laid upon them to appear thus before him and ask his forgiveness. And all of them with cries and tears joined in the prayer.

"But," said he, "who are you, who thus appear before me."

Said the spokesman, "He, who laid this penance on us, gave us the privilege of not giving you our names."

"It is no matter," said Des Ursins, "I know the names of every one of you. You are such a one. You are such a one. But let me see if you are all here." And remembering the number of the witnesses against him, he counted them and found the tally complete.

And so, considering that the part of mercy was the wise one, he gave them his forgiveness, which they received with humble obeisance, with tears in their eyes and cries of thanks, and very speedily they disappeared.

Des Ursins filled the office of Provost for several

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*Stories from Old French Chronicles*

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years after with great consideration and respect. The manner of the mysterious disappearance of the information papers was still a secret for long, but finally, when the affair had become past history, it became known. And when Des Ursins spoke of it to his friends, it was not unnatural that he should have ended the story with the words, "The Dog Did It."

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*LA HIRE'S PRAYER*

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**I**N the year 1428, the Counts of Warwick and Suffolk, with a large force of Englishmen, and their allies, besieged Montargis, a city about fifty miles south of Paris. It was held by a Gascon gentleman named Bouzon de Failles, with a valiant company. The English made their siege works so close that no one could get in or out of the city without great difficulty, and on the outside of their works, they made ditches and hedges, leaving some open spots, through which the English camps could be entered. The English pressed the siege strongly, and with their bombards and cannon broke the walls in divers places. Those within the city defended themselves bravely and held out a long time; but their provisions began to give out, and it became clear that they could not hold out much longer. This becoming known to the Count de Richemont, constable of France, and to Count Dunois, they got together provisions and as large a force as they could, among whom were the Seigneurs de Graville, de Gancourt, Estienne de Vignoles,

called La Hire, and others. They considered how they might put the provisions into the city, and concluded that, if they should make a strong skirmish in one place, they might throw the provisions in on the other side. So the constable went towards one side, and Dunois, with whom was La Hire, towards the other. La Hire, with sixty lances, was directed to move in front of the English works, to find out their position; and Dunois promised to follow him; and there was with La Hire a Scotch captain, named Quennede (Kennedy) and the Abbott of Serquencions, with three or four thousand footmen. The English had fortified their lines outside with ditches and piles, along which they had built their huts covered with bushes and dry grass. When La Hire approached the lines, he saw that it would be a very difficult thing to force them, but he saw a passage through which it seemed that they might break in. So he and his companions put their lances in rest to charge through it. Near La Hire was a chaplain, whom he called and told him to give him absolution at once. The chaplain said he must first confess his sins. La Hire replied that he had no time for that, for they were just about to charge the enemy; and that he had done what men



of war were accustomed to do. Thereupon the chaplain gave him absolution, for what it was worth; and then La Hire made his prayer to God, saying in Gascon, having joined his hands, "God! I pray Thee today to do for La Hire, as much as Thou wouldst wish La Hire to do for Thee, if he were God and thou wert La Hire."

And he considered that he had prayed and said well. Then he and his companions charged through the entrance into the English lines, followed by the men on foot. The English were surprised at dinner; but they called "To Arms" at once, and fought valiantly; but the French set fire to the English huts and forced their attack on both sides of the city so that by nightfall the English were discomfited. The siege was raised and the city delivered. And this was, as was said, a very valiant enterprise, brought to success by the said Estienne de Vignoles, called La Hire.

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## A CONSPIRACY AND AN AMBUSCADE

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### 1. *The Conspiracy*

**F**RANCOIS DE SCARPEAUX, Sire de Vieilleville, was one of the best soldiers of France in the wars in Italy between the Emperor Charles V and King Francis I.

He was so brave a soldier and also so wise in strategy and so shrewd in judgment that the Emperor gave him the name of "The Lion-Fox," a soubriquet which he retained all his life. After the death of Francis I, his son, Henry II, in the year 1552, appointed de Vieilleville to be governor of the city of Metz, a city near the northwestern boundary of France, and about twenty-five or thirty miles south of the city of Luxembourg, which was held by the Imperialists, with a strong garrison under the command of the Count de Mesgue. The state of war between France and the Empire still subsisted; and these two governors of the two cities watched each other across the border, ready to attack each other, or defend. The "Lion-Fox" felt the necessity for

increased watchfulness, because some reforms, which he had made in Metz as governor, had raised a spirit of faction among some of the citizens against him, and the strict discipline which he had enforced upon his soldiers had made some of the worse elements among them dissatisfied with his rule.

Now there was in Metz a monastery of cordeliers, who were called Observantins, who had come to Metz from a place in Flanders, called Nyvelles. Their guardian often went to Nyvelles to visit his relatives, and when there went to pay his respects to Queen Mary of Hungary, who was Regent of the Emperor in Flanders, and talked with her about affairs in Metz and in Germany and France, and became really a spy for her. She, seeing his disposition, one day asked him if anything could be undertaken against Metz, and if so, how. The monk told her it would not be very difficult, by reason of the dissatisfaction among the soldiers and the citizens, the causes of which he explained to her. And he told her that, if she would furnish him thirty faithful and experienced soldiers, he would bring them into Metz two by two disguised as cordeliers; and he would hope within two months to render a great service to the emperor, for she could send

reinforcements to the Count de Mesgue, and on a certain night the count's force could come and scale the walls of Metz at a place where they were low, while he, the monk, would set fire to a hundred houses on the opposite side of the city, to which everybody would run, to help put out the fire, while the monks would come to help the escalade. and more than a thousand of the garrison would rise and cry "Liberty! Liberty! Death! Death! Kill that villain Vieilleville." But he required a promise that he should be made bishop of Metz, after it was captured. The regent gave him the promise and a rich ring and five hundred crowns to meet the expense.

The monk was so diligent that in less than three weeks he had brought all the men he had asked for into his monastery disguised as cordeliers, and had gained over all the real monks, twenty in number, by promises of personal advantage; and they all performed ceremonies in the churches and houses so sanctimoniously that they were none of them discovered to be soldiers.

But the word came to de Vieilleville from a trusty servant, whom he was maintaining in Luxembourg, that the Queen Regent of Flanders was sending to the Count de Mesgue, twelve hundred chosen,

well-equipped arquebusmen, eight hundred good cavalry and a great number of the nobility of the Low Countries; and moreover the count had given orders to get ready twenty thousand rations; so that there must be some enterprise on foot, though the agent had not been able to find out what it was; that two cordeliers had come and had a long interview with the count, and the report was that they came from Brussels, though he did not know if that was true, but he sent the word to de Vieilleville that he might think it over.

The Lion-Fox made no delay. He quietly went with a guard to the monastery of the regular cordeliers. He sent for the guardian and inquired how many of them were there, had them all ordered to appear in the church, and counting them found that none were missing. He then went to the Observantin Convent and asked to see the guardian. The monks told him the guardian had gone to Nyvelles to bury his brother. He asked how many there were of them and where they were. They told him that three or four were in the city asking alms. But de Vieilleville noticed that they turned pale and seemed embarrassed, and he locked all the doors and searched through the convent, and in one of the

rooms he found two of the false cordeliers who were sick. But the clothes of the bed where they were lying were fine for monks, and their breeches were shaped like soldiers' breeches and their doublets which lay on the bed, were in colors. So they were seized at once, and by threatening them with instant death, which they saw before them, for the thumbs were on the locks of the arquebuses, they were made to tell at once who they were, and who made them come there and for what business. They freely confessed that they were not cordeliers, although they had their heads tonsured, but that the Queen of Hungary had told them to do whatever the guardian ordered; that they did not know on what business he wanted to employ them, but hoped to know when he came back from Luxembourg, whither he had gone. De Vieilleville concluded that the two monks who had had the conference with Count de Mesgue were of this fraternity. He at once gave orders that all the city gates should be shut, except the Yffroy Bridge gate which opened towards Luxembourg, and he put Captain Amezan with a number of arquebusmen in charge of the monastery with orders to let no one go out, but to seize and hold as prisoners, when they came, those who were

out in the city, which the captain faithfully did. He then went to the Yffroy Bridge Gate, which was in charge of Captain Salcede, and from there he sent word to Madam Vieilleville to have dinner without waiting for him or asking where he was or what he was doing. He sent all his guards to get their dinners, keeping with himself one gentleman, a page and a lackey, and staying himself among the soldiers who were to guard the gate. He sent word to Captain Salcede, telling him, if he had not dined, to bring the dinner whatever it was, without adding anything, and they would eat it together at the gate, which he was not going to leave till some one whom he was expecting came; and the captain was to ask no questions, but come at once with what he had, even if it was only garlic and radishes, Spanish fashion, for Salcede was born in Spain. He, much excited, came at once with his dinner, which was passably good, and they had no sooner disposed of it than the sentinel reported that there were two cordeliers on horseback coming full trot.

De Vieilleville took a halberd and went out of the gate and stood at the barrier with two soldiers only, ordering all the rest to keep back. The monk, who was the guardian, recognizing him,

was astonished to see him there, doing the duty of a soldier, and got off his horse. De Vieilleville told him to come to Salcede's quarters, as he had something to say to him, and he took thither both of the monks, under guard of two soldiers. When they were in the captain's room, de Vieilleville put everyone out but the captain and his lieutenant and then said to the monk, "Well! Master Hypocrite! So you have been conferring with the Count de Mesgue! You must tell me what you have been negotiating with him about, or die at once. If you will confess the truth I will give you your life, even if you have been plotting against mine. You cannot go to your monastery. It is full of soldiers and all your monks are prisoners. Two of them have confessed that they are not monks but soldiers, who came here by order of the Queen of Hungary. Come, tell the truth quick, or else make your confessions to each other, for you will not live an hour."

The poor guardian saw, by what the governor said, that he had a good deal of light upon the plot; but, falling on his knees, he denied that he had done anything wrong. He said the two men, of whom the governor spoke, were relations of his, who had



killed their brother in a quarrel over the inheritance, and he had brought them to Metz as cordeliers to save them. "See!" said de Vieilleville, "how this villain knows how to disguise his plot." As he said this, there came a soldier from the captain, whom he had left in charge of the monastery, and brought word that there had come there six more cordeliers who all of them wore, under their monk's clothes, doublets and breeches like soldiers, and that he held them all as prisoners. "Well!" said de Vieilleville to the guardian, "had these fellows too killed their brother? I swear by the living God that you shall tell at once what is hid under all this, or I will make you suffer well before you die." And he ordered at once that the monk should be tied up until the provost should come to put him to the question.

The cordelier seeing that he could not escape and that his treachery was more than half discovered, prostrated himself again and begged for pardon, saying that the glory of the world and ambition had led him astray, but he would tell the truth provided it was the governor's good pleasure to give him his life. De Vieilleville answered that he would have his life and the truth too, for he knew the way to get

it. Still if the monk would swear to confess everything truly about this whole enterprise, he promised, on the faith of a gentleman of honor, to send him back to his own country free and without disgrace, and to pardon those whom he had employed in the matter. And he showed the monk the letter of his agent in Luxembourg (at seeing which the monk was overpowered) and told him he himself had been at the gate as a soldier for fear there should be a failure to catch him when he came.

So the monk, as if he was already half condemned, began to say that he saw plainly that God was helping the governor and keeping the city for him, for without this information the city would have been lost to the King and won for the emperor that very day, for all the troops mentioned in the letter from Luxembourg were only six leagues from Metz, near Mt. St. Jean, and were to march thence without stopping, so as to be at nine o'clock in the evening, before the walls of the city at Yffroy Bridge.

"For," said he, "I was to set fire to a hundred or more houses on the other side of the city. And it is certain that everybody would have run thither to put the fire out, and in the tumult and fright those forces would make the escalade, and the thirty

soldiers would help them on one side on the rampart and my twenty monks on the other. And they have with them twelve cartloads of ladders of the right length."

Whereupon de Vieilleville ordered a captain to take the monk and keep him a close prisoner and let no one communicate with him, to ensure which the captain locked him up in a wardrobe in his own quarters.

## *2. The Ambuscade*

The Lion-Fox came to an instant determination. He sent certain orders to his lieutenant and to six captains of his garrison. He ordered a sergeant-major to take fifty fagots to each of the open spaces at four of the gates of the city, and between 6 and 7 o'clock that evening to set fire to them all. He armed himself and with ten or twelve gentlemen of his house, also armed, he went to the Yffroy Bridge gate, where, in a short space of time, the troops gathered whom, in obedience to his orders, the six captains had silently brought there. There were three companies of cavalry, two hundred halberdiers and three hundred arquebusmen, with about twenty drums. De Vieilleville put himself at their

head, and led them without sound of drum or trumpet about a league out from the city, having with him Captain la Plante, an excellent guide who knew the whole region better than the men who lived there. Calling the captains together, he told them the plot which he had discovered and that the Imperialists were then, as he believed, on the march towards Metz, and that he proposed to ambush them on the way and fight them even if they were three to one. Captain la Plante told him he would take them to a wood about a league away, which was a suitable place for the ambush. He led them to a village, just beyond which was a wood alongside of the road for quite a distance, and where several roads led in several directions. De Vieilleville divided his small force into six detachments. One he put in the village, others he placed on the side roads, a company of halberd men he hid in the bushes beside the road (not putting the arquebuses there lest the smell of their matches should excite the enemies' attention) and a company of horse under his lieutenant on the road towards the city, behind whom he took his own station with forty horse and his suite. He divided the drums between the various detachments, and he sent la Plante forward to reconnoiter and

report the coming of the enemy. In about an hour and a half la Plante returned at full speed and said that they were coming at a rapid rate, and that they must have learned of the fire in Metz, for he had seen it himself. Before long the vanguard of the Imperialists entered the wood and the halberd men heard them talking to each other. One said, "Let us hurry on! We are late!" Another, "Mon Dieu, we shall be rich today. What a great service we shall do the emperor." Another, "We shall make him ashamed, for with three thousand men we shall do what he could not do when he besieged the city with a hundred thousand." At their head marched arquebusmen with the carts of ladders and the baggage, behind them a company of cavalry with de Mesgue at their head, who was heard to say, "We must hurry. I have seen the light of the fire. Our delay may be a harm. March on! March on!" Because of the hurry they did not keep their ranks, but marched pell-mell. And behind them came seven or eight hundred horsemen of the nobles of the Low Countries, who were volunteers. All were so little on their guard that the nobles had given their helmets and lances to their valets to carry for them.

Then all at once the ambuscade broke into activity. The lieutenant with his cavalry charged down the road from Metz upon them, the halberdmen sprang out of the bushes upon them; the arquebusmen shot them down like flies, and what with the shouts of "France! France! Vieilleville! Charge! Charge!" on every hand and the noise of the guns and the roar of the drums, echoed and re-echoed by the depths of the wood, any orders which the Count de Mesgue or his captains gave could not be heard. Whichever way the Imperialists undertook to make head they were met by a new detachment, and after several ineffectual efforts, the frightened men, thinking that the whole garrison of Metz was upon them, broke and ran in every direction every man for himself, while the French pursued and cut them down in their flight, with terrible loss. Eleven hundred and forty-five were left dead on the spot and four hundred were made prisoners, and the rest scattered far and wide, with a loss to the French of only fifteen killed and a very few wounded.

When the rout was complete, de Vieilleville and his troop of cavalry placed themselves on the road to Thionville from which place alone, about three leagues away, could any help come to the defeated

host. They halted there about an hour, while the soldiers stripped the dead, made the prisoners secure, caught the horses that were running wild and took possession of the baggage and the carts, among which those with the ladders were not forgotten. The retreat was then sounded and by the light of the moon, which was a little past the full, they returned to the city in good order. De Vieilleville sent two messengers ahead, one to tell Madame de Vieilleville that she need not be worried about him, and the other to spread the news of the victory and have the church bells rung, for it was nearly midnight, and prayers of thanksgiving offered, which was done. And that night few people in Metz slept at all, for the celebrating of the saving of the city.

The next morning the provost came to the governor, with his report in the case of the cordeliers, who had all, fifty in number, been found guilty of treason, so that all that remained to be done was to fix their punishment and declare how and where it should be executed. But the governor said he did not think it was reasonable that the thirty soldiers should die, who had come in under orders, though they might be hung as spies, inasmuch as they had come in under

disguise as cordeliers, and then he would pardon. But they must have something to remember, and therefore the provost must make them march next morning through the city from the cathedral, three by three, each having a white stick in his hand, his head bare and the cordelier's habit over his arm. A trumpeter on horseback must go before them and proclaim that these were the monks of the Queen of Hungary who had undertaken the capture and burning of the city, but had failed, thanks to God, and that they were therefore banished forever from the city of Metz, and would be hung if they were ever caught there. And so they were to be brought to the Yffroy Bridge gate and put out of the city.

Just then word was brought to the governor that a trumpeter had appeared before the gate and had blown three summonses, and it was understood that he had come from the Count de Mesgue. De Vieilleville ordered him to be brought in and when he appeared said to him, "Well! what says the Count de Mesgue? He has had monk enough, has he not?" The trumpeter was too abashed to reply, but de Vieilleville said to him, "Speak up boldly, trumpeter! You know that people of your quality may say what they like. At any rate I give you leave."



So the trumpeter plucked up courage and answered, "Yes, by God, we have had monk enough. And may the whole monkery be cursed and given to all the devils, when it undertakes to do anything but say prayers. The count, my poor master, is in bed sick today. He said this morning when he sent me off, that it was only losing men to undertake anything against that lion-fox, de Vieilleville, and that it was great folly in him to have marched on an enterprise got up only by women and monks, in which he has lost so many good, illustrious men, and he would never do it again. And he has given me this list of people of reputation to learn if they are dead or prisoners."

So the governor ordered all the prisoners to be brought out into a public square, and went through their ranks with the trumpeter to see if those on the list were there. But he did not find them and said that the Emperor had lost more than thirty of the great lords of the Low Countries and the Empire. He was kept in the city till the next morning to see the procession of the false cordeliers, and then he departed taking with him direction for the ransoming of those who had been captured in the fight.

It remains to tell the fate of the cordeliers, who

were held in close prison, where they had leisure to reflect on their sins and to indulge in the hope that, at some time, they would be set free and discharged of the condemnation for treason which hung over them. But it happened that a very short time after this de Vieilleville was called to court, where he received great honors from the King; and as he was to be absent from Metz for some months, a new governor was sent there in his place. As soon as the monks heard this they lost all hope, for they had no promise from the new governor. And so one evening the provost came and told them that they had better hear each other's confessions, for the next day would be their last. And in order that they might be free to clear their consciences in this way, he took them out of the dungeons and left them all together pell-mell. But he had no sooner gone than they began to berate the guardian and four others of the older ones, who had helped him to seduce them to enter into the plot, telling them with many hard epithets that it was their wicked ambition to be bishops and abbots that had ruined them. One word led to another and finally, carried away by rage, the sixteen fell upon the guardian and the four with such fury that the guardian died

on the spot, and the four were so hurt that they had to be carried to the place of execution the next morning in the cart, where they were hung and ten others with them, all in their monk's robes. Four of them, being young and as it were, novices, made their amends with cords around their necks, torches in their hands, barefoot and on their knees during the execution, after which they were driven out of the city and sent to Flanders to tell the news to the Queen of Hungary. King Henry thoroughly approved of this execution and said he should never forget the day of the ambushade, which was one of the most remarkable and memorable actions that there had been in France for three hundred years. And there came out of the affair a proverb for the people of the court, for, if they saw pages or lackeys fighting, they said they were hearing each other's confessions like the cordeliers of Metz.

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*BAYARD'S FIRST TOURNAMENT, OR  
THE ABBE'S OVERSIGHT*

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**P**IERRE DU TERRAIL, called the Chevalier Bayard, from the name of his paternal estate, and the Good Chevalier without Fear and without Reproach, from the excellence of his character, was born in Dauphiny. When he was thirteen years old, his father, who was advanced in years, called his two sons to him and asked them what they wished to do with their lives. George, the oldest, said he did not want to go away from home, and his father said, "Well! since you love the house, you shall stay here and fight the bears." Pierre said he wished to follow arms, as so many of his ancestors had done. The father then called in some of his friends, among whom was the bishop of Grenoble, a kinsman, to take counsel as to what should be done. The bishop proposed that Pierre should be offered as a page to Charles, Duke of Savoy, to whom he would himself take the boy. His proposal was acceptable, and the next day, the boy of thirteen left home and parents, in the bishop's

train, and mounted on a good horse which the bishop had given him. He had skill in horsemanship, which attracted the attention and praise of the Duke of Savoy, who took him as one of his pages, and afterwards of Charles VIII, King of France, to whom the Duke presented him. As the old Chronicler says, he rode his horse "as if he had been a man of thirty years, one who all his life had seen war." The King accepted him as one of his pages, but placed him in the family of the Seigneur de Ligny at Lyons, where he remained till he was eighteen years old, when he ceased to be a page and was counted as one of de Ligny's company. Shortly afterwards the King came to Lyons and, while he was there, a Burgundian noble called Claude de Vauldray, who was skilled in arms, came to the King and asked leave to offer a jousting to the young gentlemen of the court. The King granted his request, and, as was the custom in such things, de Vauldray hung up three shields at the jousting place, one of which was to be touched by whoever wished to compete with him in the joust, whether on horseback with headless lances or with iron-pointed lances or on foot with axes, the names of competitors being taken down by Montjoy, king of arms.

Now it happened, one day, that Pierre, with one of his companions named Bellabre, passing by those shields, showed such a grave face that Bellabre asked him what was the matter. He answered, "I would like to touch those shields of Messire Claude, but I do not know who would furnish me the horse and accoutrements which I should need, if I did." Bellabre said, "Are you anxious about that, my friend? Have you not your uncle, the Abbé of Esnay? We will go to him and if he will not furnish the money that you will need, we will take his cross and mitre off him. But I think he will do it willingly." So Pierre went and touched the shields. Montjoy, when he saw him, said in surprise, "Why! my friend! you have not got a beard that is three years old, and do you undertake the combat with Messire Claude, who is one of the stiffest chevaliers that we know?" "Montjoy, my friend," answered he, "I do not do it for pride or vanity, but only because I wish to learn something from those who can teach. God, if He pleases, can grant me grace, so that I shall do something which will please the ladies." Thereat Montjoy laughed and was content.

The next morning, the two young men took a small boat and went down the river to Esnay. The

first man they met there was the abbé who was walking in the close with one of the monks and saying his prayers. He had heard that his nephew had touched the shields of de Vauldray and suspected that he was going to be called on for funds, so he gave them not a very cordial reception, but addressing his nephew said, "Ha! Scapegrace! who gave you the boldness to touch those shields of de Vauldray? It is not three days since you were a page and you are not seventeen or eighteen years old. They ought to give you the stick for showing such pride." Pierre answered, "I assure you, Monseigneur, that it was not pride that made me do it. The desire to attain by virtuous deeds to the honor which your predecessors and mine have reached, has led me to do it. And I ask you, who are the only relative or friend to whom I can have recourse, to help me with some money so that I may get what is necessary."

"My faith!" said the abbé, "you will go elsewhere to find someone to lend you money. What the founders of this abbey gave their gifts for was the service of God and not to be expended for jousts and tourneys."

"But, Monseigneur!" broke in Bellabre, "if it

were not for the virtues and deeds of your predecessors, you would not be abbé of Esnay. Your nephew wished to get on in the same way and you ought to help him. It would not cost you more than two hundred crowns to put him in good shape and he will bring honor to you which will be worth more than ten thousand."

Quite a discussion followed, but finally the abbé yielded and agreed to help. He went and got a hundred crowns, which he gave to Bellabre, saying, "There, young man, I give you that to buy a couple of horses for this valiant man-at-arms. His beard is too young for him to handle money. And I will write to Laurenien to furnish him with what he needs to accoutre himself for this tourney." "You do well," said Bellabre, "and I assure you that, when it shall be known, everyone will honor you for it."

So the abbé wrote the note for Laurenien as he had said, and gave it to them; and the young fellows, after thanking him very humbly for what he had done, returned to their boat in great glee to go back to Lyons. When they had got fairly away, Bellabre said, "Do you know, my companion, that, when God sends good fortune to a man, he must use it wisely and well. What one gets out of the monks



is blessed bread. Now we have got a letter to Laurenien telling him to furnish to you what you need, and we must go to him at once before your abbé thinks what he has done, for he has not put in the letter any limit on the amount of the accoutrements that he is to give you. By the faith of my body, you will get enough for the tourney and for a year besides, or you never ought to have another thing."

Pierre, with a laugh, said, "Faith! that is the situation. Now, we must hurry, for I fear that the abbé may see what he has done and send one of his people at once to name the amount to which he means me to be supplied." So they hurried the boatman and went straight to Laurenien's shop. He was a very honest and good merchant. After they had saluted each other, Bellabre said to him, "By my soul, Sire Laurenien, my companion and I have just come from seeing a good abbé, Monseigneur Esnay." "That he is," said Laurenien, "and I am one of his good servants. I have dealt with him up to twenty thousand francs, and I never found a rounder man." "But you do not know," said Bellabre, "what a good thing he has done for his nephew, my companion here. He has learned that

Pierre had touched the shield of Messire Claude de Vauldray, because he wished to gain honor, as his ancestors had. We went to see the abbé this morning and he gave his nephew three hundred crowns to buy horses; and besides, in order that there shall not be any man in the company better fitted out, he gave us a letter to you, to furnish him whatever will be necessary." They showed the letter and he, knowing the abbe's signature, said, "I assure you, gentlemen, that there is nothing here which is not at your service." So he showed them cloth of gold, cloth of silver, brocaded satins, velvets and silks, of which they selected as much as came to seven or eight hundred francs, and they then took leave of him and sent at once to get tailors to make up the goods, for it was only three days to the tourney, and there were six suits to be made, because Pierre wanted his companion to wear the same costume as himself.

Then Bellabre said that they must get horses and he knew a man who had two which he thought would do, and he thought the man would be glad to sell, because he had broken his leg a few days ago. So they went and saw the man and found that he would sell, tried the horses and found them satisfactory,

and gave him for two a hundred and twenty crowns and ten for a tip to the servant.

Now it happened that the abbé of Esnay had company to dinner that day, and during the dinner he remarked to one of his friends, "I had a terrible squeeze this morning. That boy, my nephew, de Bayard, has been so foolish as to touch the shields of Messire Claude, and he came to me this morning to ask money to get an outfit. So I am out a hundred crowns, and besides that I gave him an order on Laurenien to give him what he should want for an outfit." The Sacristan, who was one of the company, said, "On my faith, Monseigneur! you have done a good thing. Your nephew wants to follow in the steps of your grandfather who was a valiant man-of-arms, as were his relatives. I see only one thing that is bad about it. You have written to Laurenien, you say, to give him what he shall ask for, and I am sure that Laurenien would do it, if he asked for two thousand crowns' worth. I am afraid that he may get more than you meant he should." The abbé caught at the remark and said, "By St. Jacques, Sacristan! you are right, for I did not put in any limit. Call the steward!" The steward came and the abbé said to him, "Some-

one else will attend to serving us. Do you go to the city to Laurenien at once, and tell him that I wrote him this morning to give some things to my nephew, de Bayard, to fit him out for Messire Claude's tourney, and that he must give him not more than a hundred or a hundred and twenty francs' worth. And don't delay." The steward hastened to Laurenien, whom he found at table and who gave him welcome and said to him, "You have come at the right time. Wash your hands and do as we are doing." The steward thanked him, but said he had not come for that, but about the letter which the abbé had given him telling him to furnish an outfit for his nephew. Laurenien interrupted him, "I have done it already," said he. "I assure you that I have put him in good order. He is a very honorable young gentleman and Monseigneur does well to help him." "How much have you let him have?" said the steward. "I do not know," said he, "without looking at my list and the receipt on the back of the monseigneur's letter. But I should think it was about eight hundred francs." "By our Lady, you have spoiled it all," cried the steward. "How so?" said Laurenien. "Because," said he, "my master sends word to you by me not to let

him have more than an hundred or an hundred and twenty francs." "His letter did not say so," said Laurenien. "And if he had asked for more than that, he should have had it, for that was what the letter said." "Well! it cannot be helped now," said the steward, and back he went to the abbé and said, "I was too late. Your nephew had already made his trade and has only taken goods worth eight hundred francs." "Eight hundred francs! eight hundred francs!" said the abbé. "What a young reprobate! But you know where he lives. Go and tell him if he does not quickly give back to Laurenien what he has got, he shall never be a penny the better for me." Back went the steward, but the young fellow had expected such a thing and had given orders that, if any one from the abbé of Esnay asked for him, they must make some excuse, so that he should not see him. So when the steward came he was told that Bayard was with Sire de Ligny, and the next time that he had gone across the river to look at some horses and so on. So at last he went back to the abbé and told him it was lost time to hunt for Bayard, for he had been there ten times without finding him and he was surely keeping out of the way. "By my oath," said

the abbé, "he is a bad boy. But he will be sorry for it."

So the day of the tourney came, and Bayard and his companion appeared in all the splendor of their borrowed plumage, at which also appeared many young gallants of the court. "The good chevalier," says the chronicler, "who in his eighteenth year was still very young, for he had not got his growth and was naturally pale and thin, put himself among the rest and there made his first essay at arms, which was a hard beginning, for he had to do with one of the most skilled and practiced chevaliers in the world. But I do not know how it was, whether God wished him to have praise or whether Messire Claude de Vauldray took pleasure in him, but there was no one in the whole tourney, whether on horseback or on foot, who did so well or better than he did. And the ladies of Lyons gave him praise for it, for as he rode round the lists, after he had done his devoir, with his face uncovered, the ladies said, "See that little fellow! He has done better than all the rest." And good King Charles at supper said, "By the faith of my body, Bayard has made a beginning, from which I think he will make a good ending," and turning to the Sire de Ligny he said, "My

cousin, I never made so good a present in my life as when I gave him to you." And de Ligny replied, "Sire, if he is a good man you will have greater honor than I, for the praise you have given him has made him undertake this. God grant that he may continue. But his uncle, the abbé of Esnay, does not take much pleasure in it, because he got his whole outfit on the abbé's credit." And the King, who had heard the story, laughed, and so did all the company.

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*THE CHIVALRY OF CHEVALIER BAYARD*

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**I**N the wars between the King of France and the Emperor in the first part of the sixteenth century, the city of Brescia, in the north of Italy, which had been held by the French, was taken by the Venitians who were allied with the Emperor, in the following way. Two children, a child of the Count of Gambre and one of the Count of Advogadre, quarrelled, and the child of the Count of Gambre hurt the other grievously. The Count of Advogadre went to Milan to the Duke de Nemours, who was ruling for the French in that part of Italy, to seek redress. It was promised to him, but, as the Countess of Gambre was a French woman, nothing was done about it, and Advogadre in his anger went secretly to Venice and offered to put the Venitians in the way of capturing the city. And he having agreed with them, on a certain morning at dawn of day, a force of seven or eight thousand Venitians surprised the French garrison in the city and, with the help of the Advogadre faction, which he had roused up, captured it. The



French commander betook himself and what force he could hastily collect to the citadel, where also the Countess of Gambre took refuge with her family. It was well that she did so, for the first thing that Advogadre did was to destroy all the houses of Gambre and his faction. The commander of the Venitians laid strict siege to the citadel, and pressed it so closely that the French in it sent word to the Duke de Nemours at Milan, that, if they were not relieved within eight days, they would be compelled to surrender.

As soon as the capture of the city had been made known to the Duke de Nemours, he made all possible haste to gather forces to retake it before the Venitians in it should be reinforced. And on the other hand the Venitian captain-general at once marched with a force of four hundred men-at-arms and four thousand foot to give such reinforcement. But on the way he stopped to take a small castle which was held by the French, and the Duke de Nemours, making a forced march of thirty miles in the depth of winter, fell upon the Venitian force and routed it, and two days after entered the citadel of Brescia and prepared from that vantage-ground, to storm the city itself. Before making the assault, the Duke sent an offer

to the Venitians that if they would give up the city, they might go with their lives saved. The citizens would gladly have had the offer accepted, but the Venitian leader, having a force of seven thousand soldiers, declined the offer. The assault was made at once and the Frenchmen took Brescia by storm and sacked it without mercy. It is difficult for us in these days to form any adequate idea of what the storming and sacking of a city was three hundred or one hundred years ago. Napier in his "History of the Peninsular War," telling of the capture of Badajos by the British, gives the following dreadful picture of it.

"Now commenced that wild, desperate wickedness, which tarnished the lustre of the soldier's heroism. All indeed were not alike, for hundreds risked and many lost their lives in striving to stop the violence; but the madness generally prevailed, and as the worst men were leaders here, all the dreadful passions of human nature were displayed. Shameless rapacity, brutal intemperance, savage lust, cruelty and murder, shrieks and piteous lamentations, groans, shouts and imprecations, the hissing of fires bursting from the houses, the crashing of doors and windows and the reports of muskets

used in violence, resounded for two days and nights in the streets of Badajos."

To have an idea of the fury of the storming of Brescia, let any one add to Napier's picture two facts, viz: that the plunder of that city was estimated at three millions of crowns, and that, during the three days which were given to the purifying of the city after the storming, more than twenty-two thousand dead bodies, of the citizens as well as of the Venitian soldiers, were removed from the streets.

Against this lurid picture, the action of the Chevalier Bayard, "the good chevalier, without fear and without reproach," shines in brilliant contrast. He had been a leader in the attack, and in a hand to hand fight, after he had passed the rampart into the city, he was struck by a pike in the upper part of the thigh. The blow broke off the pike, leaving the iron point and part of the shaft in the wound. His companions, urged forward by him, left him in the charge of two of his archers, who stanchd the wound as well as they could, tearing up their shirts for the purpose. They took a door from a house near by and, laying him on it, with some other help carried him to the best appearing house in the neighborhood. It belonged to a

rich gentleman, who had fled to take refuge in a monastery. But his wife had remained in the house with two beautiful daughters, who had hidden themselves under some straw in a granary. When the bearers of the chevalier knocked at the door the lady came herself and opened it. He was brought in and he placed the two archers at the door, with strict orders to let no one enter except the chevalier's own people. The lady came to him, when he had been carried to a room, and told him that the house and all its contents were his, but she besought him to spare the honor and the lives of herself and her two daughters. He assured her that, as long as he should live, neither she nor her daughters should suffer any discourtesy, but the girls must keep to their room and not be seen. He asked her to send for a surgeon, and she at once went with one of the archers and brought one, who lived only two doors away. After he had examined the wound, the chevalier directed him to pull the iron out. He replied, "I am afraid you will faint away." "No," said the chevalier, "I shall not; I have known before this what it is to have an iron drawn out of human flesh—pull boldly!" So they pulled it out though the pain was severe, and

all were delighted to find that no artery or large vein was injured. The wound was carefully dressed, and the chevalier remained under the surgeon's care for a month or six weeks before he was sufficiently recovered to mount a horse. During this time he found out from the lady whither her husband had betaken himself, and sent for him and brought him home in safety. The lady and her daughters not only took all possible care of him but they helped him to pass the weary hours, for as the chronicler says, the girls "were very beautiful, good and well taught, and knew well how to sing and play on the lute and the spinet and to do good work with the needle."

The enforced confinement of the chevalier was heavier upon him because he knew that the French and Spanish armies were approaching each other; and the thought that a battle might be fought without his having part in it was very grievous to him. He had told the Duke de Nemours that he would be there whenever it should come, if he had to be carried in a litter. At last the surgeon told him that his wound was so far cured that he could ride a horse, though it would need constant attention and care; and the chevalier determined to start in two days.

The chronicler tells the rest of the story as follows:

“The lady of the house with her husband and children, considered themselves as his prisoners and that, if he chose to hold them to ransom, he might well demand of them ten or twelve thousand crowns. So on the morning of the day of his departure, the lady came to his room with a servant who carried a small steel box. She found him sitting in a chair and threw herself on her knees before him, but he raised her and would not listen to her till she was seated near him. Then she said, ‘Monseigneur! the grace which God showed to me, when the city was taken, in sending you to my house, has been no less than the saving of the lives of my husband and myself and of our two daughters, and of their honor, which they should hold more dear. And moreover since you have been here, there has been no injury done to any of us or to the least of my people, and your people have not taken anything without paying for it. Now, sir, we know that we are your prisoners, with all that is here, to be disposed of at your pleasure. But, knowing the nobleness of your heart, which no other can equal, I have come to ask you very humbly to have pity on us. And here is a small present which I have brought,

and which I trust you will please to accept.'

"Then she took the box from the servant and opened it before him, and he saw it was full of bright ducats. The gentle chevalier, who never cared much about money, asked her with a laugh how many ducats there were. The poor woman, afraid lest he was angry at seeing so few, said 'Sir, there are only two thousand five hundred, but if you are not satisfied we can find more for you.' 'Madam!' said he, 'if you should give me a hundred thousand crowns, you would not do me so much good as you have done by the good cheer which I have had here and the good society which you have given me. I assure you that wherever I may be, as long as I live, you will have a gentleman at your command. As for your ducats, I do not wish them, thank you; take them back. I have always loved people much more than ducats. And never think but that I go away as satisfied with you as if you had given me the whole city.' The good lady was much astonished at this refusal, and threw herself again on her knees and said, 'Monseigneur! I should always think myself the most unhappy woman in the world, if you gave so little importance to the present which I make to you, which is as nothing in comparison

with the courtesy which you have already shown me and are showing me now by your great goodness.' When the good chevalier saw her so firm and that she persisted in making the present, he said, 'Well then, madam! I take it for the love of you; but go and bring me your two daughters, for I wish to say adieu to them.' The poor woman, who thought she was in paradise since her present had been accepted, went to get the girls. While she was gone the chevalier made three parcels of the ducats, two of one thousand each and one of five hundred. When the girls came they also threw themselves on their knees, but were at once raised, and the eldest of them said, 'Monseigneur! these two poor maidens, to whom you have done so much honor as to keep them from all injury, have come to take leave of you, thanking your lordship very humbly for the favor which they have received, for which they will be always bound to pray to God for you, which is all that is in their power.'

"The good chevalier, almost with tears in his eyes as he saw so much sweetness and humility in the two beautiful girls, answered, 'Young ladies! you are doing what I ought to do, that is, to thank you for the good company which you have been to



me, for which I feel very much obliged. You know that soldiers are not apt to be supplied with fine things to give to ladies, and I am very sorry that I am not so well supplied as to make you such a present as I feel bound to do. But your lady mother has given me two thousand five hundred ducats, which you see on the table. I give to each of you one thousand of them as a dowry, and for my recompense, please to pray to God for me. I ask nothing else.' And he put the ducats in their hands, whether they would or no. Then turning to his hostess, he said, 'Madam! I will take these five hundred ducats for my own to apply them to the relief of poor nuns who have been pillaged. And I give you the care of them, for you will know where is the need of help better than any other. And with that I take my leave of you.' So he took each of them by the hand in the fashion of Italy, and they all fell on their knees, weeping as if they were about to be led out to death. And the lady said, 'Oh! Flower of Chivalry! to whom no one can be compared! May the Blessed Saviour and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, who suffered passion and death for all sinners, reward you in this world and in the other.' And then they retired to their chambers. It was time for dinner. The

gentleman also came to his room and thanked him a thousand times, offering him his person and his goods to dispose of as his own, as he pleased. The good chevalier thanked him and made him dine with him; and it was not long after dinner before he ordered the horses. As he came out of his room to take horse, the two beautiful daughters came, and each of them gave him a present which she had worked during his malady. One was two pretty little bracelets, worked with hair and thread of gold and silver, and the other was a purse of beautiful satin, beautifully worked. The chevalier thanked them heartily and said that the presents, coming from such hands, were worth to him ten thousand crowns. And to do them more honor, he put the bracelets on his arm, and the purse in his sleeve, and said that he would wear them as long as they lasted, for the love of them.

“Then the good chevalier took horse. He was accompanied by his great friend, Seigneur D’Aubigny, whom the Duke de Nemours had left in command in the city, and by two or three thousand other gentlemen who rode with him, two or three miles, and then said adieu and returned to Brescia, while the good chevalier rode on to the camp of the French

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*Stories from Old French Chronicles*

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army, where he was received by the Duke de Nemours and the whole army, with as much joy as if the army had been reinforced by ten thousand men."

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*SMALL THINGS SHOW THE CHARACTER*

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ONE day a Spanish ambassador, conversing with King Henry IV, of France, said to him that he would be glad to be acquainted with the King's ministers, so that he might address each one of them according to his character. "I will make you acquainted with them on the spot," said the King. The three ministers were in the ante-chamber, waiting for the hour for the council. The King called in Chancellor de Sillery, and said to him, "Mons. Chancellor, I am troubled to see above my head a plank of the ceiling which is in bad condition, and threatens injury." "Sire," said the Chancellor, "the architects must be consulted. They must examine everything and have work done if it is needed. But we do not need to be in haste about it."

The Chancellor was sent out, and the King had M. de Villeroy come in and said the same thing to him. He, without even looking at the plank, said, "You are quite right, Sire! That is a thing to cause fear."

After he had gone out, in came President Jeannin, and he gave a very different answer to the same remark. "Sire," said he, "I don't know what you mean. That plank is all right." "But," said the king, "do I not see cracks up there? Do my eyes deceive me?" "Come, come, Sire," answered Jeannin, "you can rest in quiet. Your plank will last longer than you will."

When the three ministers had departed, the King said to the ambassador, "Now you know what they are. The chancellor never knows what he wants to do. Villeroy always says that I am right. Jeannin says just what he thinks, and he always thinks well. He does not flatter me, as you see."

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*DE PONTIS*

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**T**HE Sieur de Pontis was born in Provence in the year 1583. He died on June 14, 1670, at the age of 87 years. At the age of 14, he entered upon the career of a soldier. He served for 56 years, during which he held various grades and received seventeen wounds. He filled various offices under three kings, Henry IV, Louis XIII and Louis XIV, and was held in great esteem, especially by Louis XIII, who kept him near his person for a large part of his reign. Cardinal Richelieu, recognizing his ability, tried to detach him from the service of the King and induce him to enter into his own service, but was unable to weaken his fidelity to the King, and, taking umbrage at his ill-success, became hostile and for years interfered with de Pontis' advancement.

When de Pontis was 70 years old, the sudden death of a near friend, apparently from a stroke of lightning, compelled him to a review of his past life, and finally to his leaving the court and the

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*Stories from Old French Chronicles*

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military life. He says in his memoirs, "I began to reflect on my past life and to look with astonishment at all the time of fifty-six years, which I had employed with so much ardor, in wars and at the court, to gain a fleeting fortune, without ever thinking of the other life, and without being in the least impressed at heart by death which was continually presented to my eyes in the army. I began to consider all the perils to which I had been exposed through all that time; and my eyes being opened to that infinite mercy of my God, which had saved me from death thousands of times, to give me time at last to seek my salvation, I found myself overwhelmed by the sight of so many favors, which appeared to me as innumerable as had been all the moments of my life, each of which, as I saw plainly, might have been my last."

Thus de Pontis experienced a real conversion. He left the army and the court. He joined himself to the Jansenists and for seventeen years he lived a retired, almost a solitary life. During this time he, with the help of one of his companions, wrote the memoirs of his life before his retirement. He closes them in these pious words:

"I enjoy in my solitude, at every moment, the

pleasure that there is in living in a holy repose, far removed from the tumult and the vanity of the age, without any other occupation than that of preparing myself for my death, by trying to give to God a satisfaction for my crimes and trying in some sort to repair the loss of so many years. Now it is that I see, by my own experience, that the yoke of the Lord is sweeter and easier to bear than that of the world. I see how many more charms has solitude than society. I see how much even the bitterness, which I have tasted in all the different employments of war and of the court, contributes to make one find consolation and joy in the different exercises of a retired and Christian life. Now, comparing the services which I have rendered to several Kings with that which I am seeking to render to the Sovereign Lord of Kings and peoples, considering the infinite difference which there is between God and the greatest princes, and the inestimable happiness, which, contrary to human appearance, has been given to me, to be able at last to know the grandeur and glory of God, I cannot weary of repeating every hour these divine words which are every day chanted in the church, 'To the King immortal and invisible, the only God, be honor and



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*Stories from Old French Chronicles*

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glory, throughout all the ages, Amen.' And as I have said that the thought of death is now the only occupation of my mind, I have taken for my motto and the subject for reflection in my solitude, these four lines which a friend of mine has been so kind as to give me:

“ ‘Far from the court and war’s alarms,  
In this retreat I learn to die.  
Who dies not a long death on earth  
Will never live beyond the sky.’ ”

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## *A DIVINATION OF NOSTRADAMUS*

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**I**knew, said de Pontis, very well the nephew of Nostradamus, and he told me the following, which seems to me worth considering, about a governor of Aignes Mortes: The wife of this governor did not conduct herself with the fidelity which she owed to her husband; and, having had the ill fortune to please a constable of France, she allowed him to come and see her a little too often for her honor. The governor, having got wind of it, wished to avenge himself on the constable at the expense of the King, and resolved to treat with Spain to put the place into the Spaniards' hands. He wrote about it to the King of Spain and entered into negotiations with him. But before carrying out his design, as Nostradamus was celebrated through all France for his predictions, he determined to go and consult him in a village province where he lived, and told his wife before he started that he was going on a journey and should be gone fifteen days. As he went to mount his horse and had got one foot in the stirrup

he turned to say adieu to his wife and, rising on the stirrup, the stirrup leather broke and he fell and came near breaking his neck. On his journey he came to the river Durance, and as he entered the boat to cross it, he made a mis-step and fell into the water and came very near being drowned. As he was within two or three posts of the village to which he was going, the post horse which he was riding all at once began to rear and plunge and kick as if he were mad. The governor berated the postillion for having given him such a bad animal; but the postillion said it was the best horse in the stable, and took the horse by the bridle and succeeded in quieting him. Arrived at the house where Nostradamus lived, the governor found a servant, who seemed to be expecting him and who told him that his master had sent him to ask the gentleman to come up. He was very much surprised, and told the servant that his master could not have known that he was coming, or who he was. But the servant repeated what his master had told him. The governor, much astonished, went up to the room where Nostradamus was and saluted him, saying that his great reputation had led him to come so far to ask him to tell him something about the future

which was of importance to him. Nostradamus answered that he was very sorry he had taken so much trouble, adding "and God himself tried to turn you back three times. You would have done better to have stayed where you were. You remember what happened when you went to mount your horse, the danger of being drowned when you went to cross the Durance, and the last warning that God gave you, when that vicious horse nearly killed you on the road. All these things ought to have stopped you from coming here. You ought not to have despised these warnings from Heaven." And there-upon Nostradamus took a covering off from a globe of steel which was on the table, and told the governor to look at it, and he having done so saw as in a mirror all the incidents of his journey. This made him more curious in reference to the future, and he said this to Nostradamus, who told him he would not tell him, because he should be obliged to tell him things that would trouble him. The governor pressed him so hard that at last Nostradamus said he would tell him that he had powerful enemies whom he ought to beware of, and he added, "Your wife will be the cause of misfortune to you, if you do not take care of yourself. You should distrust

her most when she shows you the greatest friendship, for then you will have the most cause to fear." The governor conjured him to tell him if there was any way in which he could avoid the evil that threatened him, and he answered that he should not return so soon if he would avoid it. The governor in some vexation intimated that he did "not give much credit to what Nostradamus had said," and left him and returned home. When he knocked at his door at Aignes Mortes, the constable, who was there, left the house by a rear entrance; and the wife, coming down, met the governor with a great show of affection and delight, and as he was somewhat fatigued she at once got him to go to rest. At midnight, the officers of the provost came and arrested him in the King's name, and he, remembering what Nostradamus had told him, gave himself up for lost. The correspondence which he had maintained with Spain, which had been intercepted, was produced, and he was condemned and executed. So, as he had betrayed the interest of the King to avenge a personal wrong, the constable served the interests of the King in order to serve his own.

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## A NIGHT WATCH

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**K**ING Henry IV of France, being at Fontainebleau, became suspicious of one of the first lords of the court, as to his relations with a certain lady living in the castle, and suspected that he went to see her secretly, but did it so adroitly that he was not caught. The King, having thought of ways in which he could be surprised, concluded to choose a person who was faithful and adroit and bold to help carry out his plan. He told M. de Belingam, one of his principal valets-de-chambre, to find two men such as he wanted, to be placed in two spots where they could watch the man he suspected. One of the men selected was de Pontis, who was then a cadet in the regiment of the King's Guard and only seventeen years old. De Pontis tells the rest of the story as follows:

“Mons. de Belingam said to me, when I was presented to him, that this was a good opportunity to make my fortune, and to make me known to the

King, by rendering him a considerable service. 'It is thought,' said he, 'that you would not fail either in courage or in action in this affair, and it is very important for you to show that we have not been mistaken in choosing you.' Any one can judge of the state of mind of a cadet as young as I was, when I heard him speak of the service of the king and of my fortune. I thanked Mons. de Belingam, assuring him that I should never forget the favor he had done me in procuring for me so advantageous an opportunity; and I assured him that I would faithfully discharge the duty which he required of me. So he informed me of the will of the King; viz., that I was that night to station myself as a sentinel in a part of the gallery where I could not be seen, and from which I could see the one who, as His Majesty suspected, would about 11 o'clock go into a certain room in the castle; that I should follow him everywhere till he had gone back into the room where he slept, so that they might be sure who he was. And as he might open and shut some of the doors to prevent his being followed, de Belingam gave me a key which would open them all, adding that I must be contented to follow him without speaking to him, only taking care not to

lose sight of him till he had gone back into his room. I assured Mons. de Belingam again that he might rely on me in the affair, and that I hoped the matter would be speedily cleared up.

“I went at once to look for the best post for my design, and having found it I went away to wait for the hour when I must be at my post, which was the time of the King’s retiring, when this person, as they told me, generally came. So about 11 o’clock I came back to the gallery and stationed myself in a dark place where I could not be seen. After an hour I heard the one of whom they had told me coming, but as he had no lantern he could not be recognized. I gave him no chance to go into the room to which he was going, because I followed him; and he, having heard me, turned to one side into another gallery, through which he glided so skillfully and so quickly that he very near escaped me in the obscurity. That obliged me to hasten my steps to follow him more closely. He suspected at once that he was being followed, and, having gone into the stag gallery, he pulled the door to after him, hoping thus to stop me short; but was much astonished to hear the door open behind him and to find himself followed as before. Then in order to escape,



he made a hundred turns through the courts and passages, and at last made his escape into the garden, whose gate he shut hard, hoping in this way to escape from me and hide somewhere. His plan succeeded pretty well at first; for having thrown himself into a thick, tall hedge which made a good deal of shade and covered him from the moonlight, I saw no one when I got into the garden. I began to be very apprehensive; I ran this way and that without discovering him; but when I was about to give up in despair and vexed with myself for having let him get away, I returned towards the gate and looking in the thickets near by, I spied him there, and I resolved to follow him so close as not to lose him again. He, seeing that he was discovered, came out of the thicket in a rage, and made as if he would run away at speed, but all at once he turned back and said aloud, 'Ah! This is too much,' and made as if he would draw his sword. I stopped and stood firm without saying a word, as I had been ordered. As I showed that I would defend myself, which I was determined to do if I was obliged to, the gentleman, judging by my appearance that I was not disposed to let myself be crowded, turned away and went back into a gallery and thence into

his room at the door of which I placed myself as a sentinel. I was not alone for very long, for about 2 o'clock Mons. de Belingam came to learn what I had discovered. I was beginning to tell him what had passed, when the King himself appeared at the end of the gallery in his robe-de-chambre with a little lantern in his hand. We went forward at once, and though I had never had the honor of speaking to the King, I tried to give him an account of my commission as well as I could, relating without excitement all the steps which I had taken and the turns back and forward which I had made the gentleman take. And when I set forth, as simply as I could, the rage with which he came out of the thicket and afterwards had made as if he would draw his sword, the King interrupted me and said to me, 'But what would you have done, cadet, if he had come at you?' 'I should have defended myself, Sire,' said I, 'for your Majesty had had the order given to me that I was not to speak, but not that I was not to defend myself.' The King burst into a laugh and said, 'I think you would have, by the look of you.' Then he wanted me to represent to him the man's position and action, which I tried to set forth in the most lively manner which I could,

and which I judged would please him most. And this little comedy being thus finished, he told me he was perfectly satisfied with what I had done and promised that he would bear me in mind."

De Pontis says that this resulted in the King's giving him a pension of a hundred crowns a year. But he says nothing about the result to the party whose steps he had followed, which it would have been interesting for him to relate. Perhaps he knew nothing farther.

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### *A MEETING OF FRIENDS*

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**D**URING the religious wars in France, in the year 1622, Tonneins, a strong place held by the Huguenots, was besieged by a Catholic force, in which was included the Picardy regiment in which de Pontis was then an officer. A strong Huguenot force, approaching in the design to raise the siege, which the Catholic force was making by regular approach, a large part of the besiegers were drawn out to meet them, weakening the force which held the trenches; and the garrison, perceiving this, availed themselves of the opportunity to make a furious sortie.

“I was attacked at my post,” says de Pontis, “by an officer in command of about fifty men, all armed cap-a-pie. He came straight to me with a slender rapier which he held in his hand, and gave me so fierce a blow that he ran me through, just as I fired a pistol at him. The shot missed his cuirass and broke his thigh, and he fell backwards without

letting go his rapier which he drew out of my body. The soldiers who accompanied him were so frightened to see him fall, that, though victorious, they fell back more than fifty feet, which gave me the chance, as I had not fallen from the wound I had received, severe as it was, to drag myself away as well as I could, sustained by a brave soldier, named Mutois, to try and reach the bank of the river, which, by reason of a very steep place which it was necessary to descend to reach the bank, would put me in safety and save me from being captured. As I moved slowly thus, leaning on my poor soldier, a new misfortune befell us which almost reduced us to despair, for a musket shot struck Mutois in the arm. That put him almost as much in need of help as I was; and it was truly a very touching thing to see two men covered with blood and crippled and having no help but from each other. For myself I held myself up with one hand on the arm of the soldier which was not broken, and with the other I checked the flow of blood from my wound.

“It will seem almost incredible that we, in the condition in which we were, could undertake to reach the bank of the river, which was, as I have said, so difficult to reach even for men unhurt and

robust. But what will not the love of liberty and life undertake? And why marvel that God, who wished to give to both of us incomparably greater grace, should save us from this peril and also from many others in order to bring us at last, after long wanderings and strayings, to that for which he had destined us? For at last, He drew that poor boy out of the army, as He did me, and inspired him to embrace a truly Christian life in which he should think only of his own salvation. In that view he even wanted to be a Chartreux, but they would not receive him because of his arm, which was crippled by the musket shot.

“Being thus reduced to the unavoidable necessity either to be killed by the enemy or broken by the fall which we must make in rolling down the hill, for we could not go down standing in the condition in which we were, after having considered which of the two we would choose, we finally resolved rather to commit ourselves to the hands of God, than to fall into the hands of men. And so, having recommended ourselves to His Divine protection, we let ourselves roll down the hill, and, God having manifestly assisted us, because the thing was humanly impossible, we stood up again at the foot with each

other's help and walked on to reach our quarters. In the road which led along by the river, we found an officer of our regiment, named L'Anglade, badly wounded, and another named Miranne of the same regiment, who when he saw me began to cry, 'Monsieur de Pontis! I am dying, have pity on me!' I answered, 'I am dying too, my poor friend! and have as much need of help as any one. But where are you wounded?' He said he did not know, but he could do no more. It occurred to me that, as he was in armor, it might be that his armor was suffocating him. So, drawing his sword from his side as well as I could, I cut the lashings of his armor, so that it fell away, and he began at once to breathe more freely and to recover himself. So God gave me strength to save that officer's life, when I was in danger of losing my own.

"When we at last reached the camp, they carried us to Marmande, where I learned, from some soldiers of the enemy who had been taken prisoners, that the officer who had wounded me was at least as badly off as I, for he had a broken thigh, and that his name was Feron. This news surprised me and also grieved me, for he was my intimate friend, and we had been companions in the Guards. I sent a

drummer at once to him to inquire how he was and to show to him my grief at having thus met him. Feron was no less surprised to learn that I was the one whom he had struck with so hard a blow; and having answered me with the same sentiments of civility and sorrow for what had happened to me, he sent the next day to get news of me, and we continued to do this as long as we were near each other, which drew us closer to each other than we were before and increased our former friendship, which has continued till the present time. From Marmande I was taken to Toulouse, where I nearly died of my wound and of a fever which attacked me. It was more than six months before my wound was closed enough so that I could walk and it was not entirely cured till several years after."



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### *A STRANGE HIDING PLACE*

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**I**N the religious wars of France in the year 1621, the Huguenot inhabitants of Negrepelisse rose one night upon the Catholic garrison of four hundred men and killed them all. The King, when he heard it, declared that he would punish them in the same way and would not leave a soul alive. And the next year the King, with a strong force appeared before the town and took it by assault. The inhabitants, finding that no quarter was to be given them, sold their lives very dearly, causing heavy loss to the royalist force, but were all cut to pieces.

De Pontis proceeds with the narrative as follows:

“After this carnage, the soldiers began to pillage and to take the women whom they found. I was at the head of our regiment, when a perfectly beautiful girl, aged about 17 or 18 years, came hurriedly out of a house which had not yet been entered and ran and threw herself at my feet, begging me to save her honor and her life. I gave her the promise

at once, and assured her that I would rather lose my life than allow either to be taken from her. I wished to have her near me, guarded by three or four soldiers, but she thought she would not be safe unless she kept hold of the edge of my surcoat. In this way I took her through the city. On the way she was seen by a party of officers, some of whom were so insolent as to demand that I should put her in their hands; whereupon I saw myself forced to quarrel with them, preferring to have them for enemies rather than to fail in the promise which I had given and in the justice which I felt was due to an honest girl who had implored my protection. In this way I brought her to my hut. Her parents were prominent in the city, where her father was a minister; and it had happened, very fortunately for them, that they were at a house which they had in the country, having left her to take care of the house. As I saw I should be troubled further by the importunity of different persons, some of whom were of the principal men of the army, I thought over all possible ways to hide her, until I could put her in the hands of her father and mother, so as to deliver us both, her and myself, from the fear of the continual peril to which she was exposed.

“But that could not be done easily in a camp of nothing but huts, and where I knew there was so little fidelity. At last I thought of a plan, as extraordinary as can be imagined and which might appear incredible to some. As sometimes the best places to hide things are not the most secret, but those which are not suspected because they are most in sight, I thought that the carcase of a heifer, which I had had killed the day before and which was hanging up all whole in my hut, might serve my plan. I turned the belly of it to the wall, and put my prisoner in the body of the animal to see if she would be hid there. The thing succeeded very well, for the fear of the pressing peril helping her to fit herself into so small a place which was the only one that could save her, she crowded into it and made herself so small that she could not be seen at all. I told her whenever she heard a knock to run and hide there, because to stay there all the time would be unpleasant. And it happened that almost as soon as I had arranged this invention, some guard officers, under the pretence of inspecting the camp, came and knocked at my hut. They told me, when they came in, the true reason of their coming and urged me to give them a sight of her

whom God had just put into my hands. I answered them so proudly, letting them freely look through my hut, where they only saw the heifer, that they went away convinced that she was no longer with me. There is no need to tell of all the others who were taken in by the trick, and who, after having come in, went away, having seen nothing but the heifer hanging there.

“But the affair went farther and was carried to the King, who sent for me. As I was sure of the fidelity of my servants, I left my prisoner in their care, telling them to stay outside of the hut, and to say that I was not there, and not to let any one go in. The King asked me, as soon as he saw me, if it was true that I had a very pretty girl in my quarters. As I have never concealed anything from him, I told him the whole story just as it had happened. Then the King, looking at me very sharply, said, ‘Have you kept your promise?’ I swore to him before God and before him that I had, and he answered, ‘I am delighted to hear it. Finish what you have begun so well, for it is one of the finest actions of your life, and I shall consider it as one of the greatest services that you have rendered to me. If any one should happen to discover her and urge

you to let him have her, tell him that you have received orders from me to take care of her, and that I, myself, put her in your care.'

"I begged His Majesty to allow me to send a drummer to her father who was four or five leagues from camp, so that I could put her in his hands as soon as possible. This request, which showed the sincerity with which I was acting, pleased the King much, and he said that he granted my request with all his heart, and that I could not do better.

"I took leave of His Majesty, and hastened back to my hut, where I found things all right; and I told the girl to write a letter to her father telling him to come and get her at a place which I mentioned, and to tell him that the drummer who brought the letter would take him safely to the place where she and I would not fail to meet him. She wrote a note which in three words told him what I had told her to say, putting off the account of how she was in danger from which I had saved her, till she could tell it to him. The father and mother received the news with joy which can be better imagined than expressed, and were speedily at the place appointed, where I met them with the girl. Putting her in their hands, I told them that I had preserved her at the risk of

my own life, as if she had been my own daughter, and that I considered myself very happy in that God had given me the opportunity to save a young person from such an impending peril. They wished to acknowledge the service and offered me all they had in recompense for the precious present which I had given them, in restoring to them the daughter whom they had considered lost. I was satisfied with their friendship, and told them that I was sufficiently recompensed by having saved the honor of their daughter. But, before I reached my hut, I saw following me two horses loaded with game and other similar things; and the man who drove them said that his master sent it and begged me to accept at least this, which was so little that he hardly dared to offer it. I could not refuse it, fearing to cause too much chagrin to the sender, and I told the servant to tell his master that I had accepted it, so as not to disoblige him, and thanked him.

“They always remembered me afterwards. Five or six months afterwards I went by the place where the father had a house. I went to see them, and the poor girl was so transported with joy to see me again, that she threw herself at my knees, and would not leave me, showing more sense of the

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*Stories from Old French Chronicles*

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obligation which she felt toward me, because she was more herself than she had been before, and telling her father and mother that she regarded me as another father and mother, because I had saved her life and her honor."

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*A FAMILY QUARREL IN 1649*

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**T**HE house of Poligny is an illustrious house in Dauphiny. It possesses a considerable estate, called Vaubonnez, which is like a little kingdom by itself, because it includes fifteen villages which are all shut in by precipices and natural gullies, and the entrance to them is only by three different stone bridges. M. de Poligny, who was about 65 years old, had a son, whom he had named from that Vaubonnez estate. But he had also a bastard son, named Richard, whom he had made castellan or bailly of the seignorial property, and who had so conducted himself in that office that he found means to make himself, in a few years, worth more than two hundred thousand livres. When M. de Vaubonnez was quite small, they gave him a teacher who took great care of him, and was bringing him up according to his quality. When he had reached the age of 12 years they gave him a gun, and his teacher sometimes took him out to teach him to shoot the thrushes and blackbirds.



One day, when they were out on this diversion, they met *Sieur Richard*, who was taking the liberty of hunting openly over the estate. The young gentleman, not willing to bear this impudence, asked him who gave him leave to come there to hunt, and showed that he was offended, adding that he did not mean that he should do so in future. *Richard*, who was very insolent and whose mode of life was suitable to his birth, said proudly that it was no extraordinary thing, as he had always hunted there, and that he was astonished that it was considered wrong. *De Vaubonnez* replied that he did not know about its being his custom, but he advised him not to come again, and said that if he found him there again he would have his gun taken from him. *Richard* replied very insolently that no one would take his gun away till after he had broken his head. *Vaubonnez*' preceptor, hearing him speak in that way, told him that he forgot himself and did not remember that he was speaking to his *Seigneur*; that he was only the bailly of the *Vaubonnez* estate, and that he owed all his fortune to *M. de Poligny*. "I know," said *Richard*, "to whom I am indebted for my fortune; and it is not you by whom I ought to be informed; and you are meddling with what does not

concern you. When monsieur is a little taller we will talk to him and have an explanation about this matter." The preceptor replied that the affairs of M. de Vaubonnez were his; that he would not deserve to be in Vaubonnez' service if he did not take an interest in what concerned him, and that he advised Richard to keep himself within the bounds of his duty or he would be sorry. Thereupon many hot words passed between them and they separated in anger.

Richard resolved thereupon to take vengeance on the teacher. So he made up his mind to assassinate him; and having had the effrontery to come into the courtyard of Vaubonnez where he saw the young gentleman and the teacher at the door of the building, he fired a shot at him and killed him and then took to flight. Such extraordinary insolence and so black an assassination irritated Madame de Poligny exceedingly. She put the ordinary course of justice in motion and the intendant of the province condemned Richard to be hung.

The murderer, concluding that he was lost if he did not succeed in having the case taken out of the province, resolved to go to Fontainebleau in order to obtain from the King's council this removal, on

the pretext that Madame de Poligny was all powerful in the Grenoble parliament. I was then at Fontainebleau, but as I did not know the miserable man and had not yet been informed about his case, though I had the honor to be connected with Madame de Poligny, he obtained from the King a protection so that he might be free to solicit the members of the council\* and, moreover, he had himself accompanied everywhere by three or four big lackeys and by some of his friends as determined as he was.

Some time after this I received a letter from Madame de Poligny, which told me about this vile deed of Richard's and conjured me in consideration of the connection between us, to help her with my credit at the court against that assassin, who, after he had been condemned to be hung, was seeking a removal of the cause before the King's council. An assassination so vile struck me in such a way that I resolved to give the lady all the protection I could. I found out that Mons. du Gue, a master of requests, had been named reporter in the case†.

\* It was customary in France, that a party in a litigation, as well as his friends (and the more influential the better) was allowed to interview the judge and solicit a favorable decision.

† It was the custom of the French court in every case to make one of the judges to be reporter; i. e., to examine the case and report to the court his opinion upon it and upon the judgment to be given.

Although everyone advised me to object to him, because of the powerful recommendations which Richard had procured to be made, I did not wish to do it, because I knew he was a man of honor and a very good judge. I went to him and said that the reputation which he had of being a man of probity made me hope that he would do justice for Madame de Poligny; that the crime of her opponent was so black that he could not deserve any favor; that as for me, I had no interest in the matter except that justice should be done; but as the lady had begged me to assist her, I did not fear to denounce a man who had committed such a crime in the house of a noble of the country, who was his own Seigneur. "I ask for justice then, Monsieur," said I, "against an assassin who is unworthy of a pardon."

It happened, that, just as I was speaking so warmly about the matter, Richard came into the hall where we were, accompanied as usual by a number of people of no better stamp than himself. As soon as I had seen this man, so black with crimes, I was still more excited and raising my voice, I said, "Yes, sir, I again demand justice. There is the assassin—the murderer, who has the hardiness to present himself before you with his sword at his side, after

he had used arms to sacrifice a man of honor to his revenge.

“I demand justice at your hands against this man, who, being a prisoner of the King and guilty of a crime, has the insolence to bear arms still. Order him, sir, to constitute himself a prisoner and to pay the proper respect to the King’s council.”

Although the reporter had received, as I have said, powerful recommendations in favor of Richard, such a bold speech, coming from a person who was not at the time wearing a sword, astonished him as well as Richard so much that they were both almost abashed. But as the voice of justice is very strong, and moreover as the man to whom I spoke was a man of honor, he could not refrain from saying to Richard that I was right, and that he forbade his appearing thus with a sword at his side before him, which compelled Richard to leave at once quite discountenanced and in a very bad humor at me for having thus had him condemned to put off his sword.

The reporter assured me that he would do what was just, but I thought it wise to make it more certain by the assistance of my friends. So I got the help, among others, of Marshal de Villeroy, who

was a particular friend of mine and with the best grace in the world agreed to solicit in favor of Madame de Poligny. Having asked me to dine with him the next day he invited the reporter also. And, as we rose from the table, the marshal said very pleasantly to M. du Gue, "Oh, sir, you must deliver me from the importunity of this man (indicating me). He makes me believe that I have some credit with you. Is he right about that? And can I be sure that you will not refuse me."

"You do me honor and justice, sir," said du Gue. "I can no more refuse you anything than you can urge me to anything that is not just."

"Well, sir," said the marshal, "I only ask that, for the love of me, you will bear in mind the case of Madame de Poligny, and will do justice in it. They say that the crime of the man whom she is proceeding against is so black that he is unworthy of pardon."

Not to prolong the matter uselessly, I add in a word that, the reporter being a very good judge and seeing himself powerfully urged to do justice, Sieur Richard was refused the removal which he was seeking, and was sent back to the Grenoble parliament, where the case was to be examined anew and concluded. He was so upset by this news, that,

seeing that he had no resource left and that his loss of the case was certain, he resolved to humble himself and ask pardon of me, which he did; and when he came to me he showed all submission that could be imagined to move me. He conjured me to try and obtain mercy for him and to write to Madame de Poligny in his name, assuring her that he was disposed to give her whatever satisfaction she required; that he acknowledged with grief the crime which he had committed and believed it was the devil which had pushed him into it.

I asked him coldly enough if he had well considered what he was saying and if he spoke from the bottom of his heart. "For," said I, "if you undertake to promise something to me and then you fail to keep your word, I will take up the matter against you myself and you will see strange things."

He protested that he was speaking sincerely and that he was determined to keep his promise. Thereupon I concluded to write to Madame de Poligny in his favor, having some pity for the state he was in, and besides wishing to avoid the consequences of such a miserable lawsuit. So I wrote to the lady to tell her about Sieur Richard's state of mind, and to urge her to be willing to take gentle measures and

have a settlement of the affair and be merciful to a man who showed real repentance for his crime and a desire to give to her every sort of satisfaction.

Sieur Richard went back to Dauphiny and sent my letter to Madame de Poligny; and she, being disposed to yield to my request, said it was necessary to see if the man would return to his duty and would keep the word which he had given to me. So they selected four arbiters and for umpire the Duke de Lesdiguieres, to fix the terms of the settlement. But when they fixed upon a sum for him to pay, he thought it was too much, and squirmed out of the arbitration, and found means to get it set aside, giving the King's council to understand that he had got some new evidence for his justification, which had not been produced.

Being very much puffed up by the success of this secret intrigue, he stayed boldly in his house about three musket-shots from Vaubonnez, and paraded proudly everywhere as if he had been fully justified, being always accompanied, however, by six or seven of his friends, as fit for the gallows as himself.

Madame de Poligny's husband, who was still living, was of peaceable disposition and hated quarrels and law suits. He found himself much



embarrassed, for he was kept for three days in his house, as if he was besieged by that miserable fellow, who was going through the country-side and was ready to make de Poligny trouble at any time. I had been sent to Provence by an order of the King to attend to some business there; and Madame de Poligny came to me there, seeing that the fine promises of Sieur Richard amounted to nothing, and that she and her husband and son were exposed to continual insults from him.

Letting me know the bad state of affairs, she conjured me, by consideration of our friendship and connection, to help deliver her from the violence of that tyrant. I told her that as long as I was occupied by the King's business I could only get help for her by writing to my friends, but that I had no doubt that my letters would lead them to act as much as my presence. But the lady knew too well the insolent temper and violent nature of Sieur Richard and the necessity of my presence on the spot, to be satisfied with my offer to treat the affair by writing. So she planned to attach me to her by closer bonds, and proposed to me to marry her son with a niece of mine, named Anne de Pontis, as they were both of a suitable age and the alliance would make the

interests of her house my own and I should have to consider them as such. I told her I was infinitely obliged to her, that my niece was not worthy of the honor, but that if I should refuse it for her it would be because I dared not accept it. She understood that I consented, and showed that she was much pleased by it, and pressed me to conclude on the marriage, which we did without many formalities, relying on the sincerity and good faith with which we acted towards each other. I told her I hoped she would not find herself deceived in the opinion which she had of me, and I assured her that, as soon as I had finished with the King's business, I would take right hold of her affair and would perish rather than that I should not bring her out of it with honor.

So young de Vaubonnez and my niece were married with much magnificence; and as soon as I had finished the execution of the orders which the King had given me I arranged to go with the young husband to put him in possession of his estate. So I went myself to Vaubonnez, accompanied by ten or twelve of my friends, well armed and mounted, with all our men.

When *Sieur Richard* learned of our arrival, he

shut himself in his house with his people and, judging that it would not be wise for him to meet us, he ran away the following night, so as not to be exposed to any vexation which he might reasonably fear he would receive at our hands. But, having learned some days after that I had let my friends go away, and that I was staying alone at Vaubonnez, he took courage and came back by night to his house. He even had the boldness to send the next day to ask me that I would let him come and see me and that I would give him liberty to go about where he pleased. I answered the man who brought this message that I did not advise Monsieur Richard to present himself before me, and that if he was bold enough to do so, he might be sorry for it, rather than I. When he received my answer he began to swear, being in a great rage against me, and said that I was a fine man to hinder him from going where he wanted to, and that we should sometime see which was the stronger man. But he had more bluff than courage, and it turned out that he was haughty only when he had the power in his hands.

On one feast-day he sent to me to say that he did not believe I would hinder him from going to the Vaubonnez church. I replied that I would advise

him to go to mass somewhere else, and that I would not allow a murderer, who had in so cowardly a way assassinated a man of honor in the castle of Vaubonnez, to present himself in the church of Vaubonnez, as if to brave his Seigneur, whom he had so outrageously offended by that action. So I ordered my people, who were all brave soldiers, to put themselves in good array, and I accompanied Madame de Poligny and my niece to the church, resolved to die rather than let that assassin come in. When I was in the church, another person came to tell me that M. Richard was on the road and was coming. I said to the man, "Go and tell him that I am waiting for him and will meet him there." And at once I sent a trusty man of my servants and my valet to a very narrow part of the road through which Sieur Richard must come, telling them to make haste and get there. "And," said I to them, "if Richard comes, tell him that I have given you that post to guard and that you advise him not to come ahead. If he retires let him go, and don't run after him. But if he acts as if he meant to pass, or breaks out into abuse of you, run at him vigorously as you know how; and don't be afraid, for we will back you up."

When Sieur Richard was informed that our two soldiers were at their post, he was not bold enough to appear there, for fear of the disgrace of having to retreat. He contented himself as usual with saying many hard words of me, but I easily endured what I did not hear. He felt that he was pushed to the wall, and was in despair; and what served to increase his bad humor was that some officers of the Lesdiguières regiment, who were informed of what was going on, came to see me to offer me their services against that brute. Because of that he was obliged to keep himself close in his house and did not dare to appear abroad.

One day those officers made up a party to go and breakfast at a village about a league from Vaubonnez. I had opposed it at first, fearing some unpleasant meeting with a desperate man, and not wishing by any fault of mine to get into some bad affair which might bring a lawsuit upon me. But I finally consented so as not to vex the others, who wanted to go very much. But we amused ourselves so much by conversing and riding to one point and another, that when we reached the village it was time for dinner rather than breakfast, which made M. de Poligny and me say that we had better go

back, for we should get a better dinner at home. And he and I started back to the house. But young Vaubonnez was vexed at not breakfasting with the officers, and said to them, without saying a word to us, that it was not reasonable to go back without drinking a glass; that the breakfast was ready and that, while we went on a little before them, they could taste what had been prepared. So they stayed and let M. de Poligny and me go on alone thinking that they would follow us in a moment.

When we were in sight of *Sieur Richard's* house which had an outlook along the high road, he perceived us; and seeing that there was no one following us for more than a quarter of a league behind us, he resolved to come and attack us. So he came out of his house with four or five of his friends, and they placed themselves at a turn of the road where we must pass. They were all on foot but well armed with pistols and swords, and one of them carried a halberd. When I saw him in that spot and in such a posture, I concluded that, as we had to pass there and I had no disposition to turn back, there was going to be a great fire. Goodman de Poligny, who was of an age when he only wanted repose, was not pleased that our friends had quitted us so inoppor-

tunely, nor was I very much so, but there was no time to deliberate and we had to make up for their absence by our courage. When we were about forty paces from *Sieur Richard*, the miserable fellow began to draw his hat down over his eyes and turn up one side of the brim; and with a posture and an air that was more proud than was fit for him he paraded in the middle of the road, looking at me with a fierce wild look as if he would like to tear me to pieces. And doubtless he would have done it, if he had been able, but God gave me extraordinary fortitude for the meeting. We went on at the same pace towards him, when all of a sudden, drawing a pistol, he came towards me swearing and howling like a madman. Seeing myself thus threatened, I drove both spurs into my horse's flanks with all my strength; and he, being extremely quick and recognizing by that signal what his master wanted, threw himself with incredible force and quickness into the midst of that troop of armed men, threw some of them to the earth, drove away the rest and forced them to hide along the hedges as well as they could. But I, paying particular attention to *Richard* who was playing the bully more than the rest, and who was the sole cause of the quarrel, caught him by

the collar and giving him a whirl with extraordinary force, threw him to the earth and drove my horse several times over him to break an arm or a leg, not meaning to kill him. But God did not permit it, for my horse every time jumped over him without stepping on him. I had two pistol bullets through my mantle, and my horse was badly hurt. I had also a blow from a halberd which nearly broke my neck, but being directed by the hand of God, only cut the collar of my coat. I can say that I never had a greater service from my horse than then. He whirled about like a monkey, and I used him as if he had had reason so as to do what I wished and to rush upon one and another before they had time to recover themselves.

But truly, in the midst of this bloody tragedy, I had a kind of aversion to see Goodman de Poligny who, just as he saw me rush in and overthrow these people with my horse and my sword, was thinking less of the service that I was rendering him than of the legal proceedings which might come from it, and he began to shout to *Sieur Richard* and the rest, "At least, *messieurs*, it is not I who am the cause of all this. You are witnesses that it is only *M. de Pontis*." Then addressing himself to me, he added



"Ah! sir, you are spoiling everything. I had right on my side in my suit. And now they will have the right to sue me." I shouted back without being disturbed much, "yes, yes, sir, they are witnesses that it is not you, but me, who is guilty of this fault, if it is one. I take it on myself. I shall be their opponent. And I am very willing to be such for the love of you."

Soon after, our friends, who had stayed behind and who hastened up on hearing the disturbance, arrived when the affair was finished and the assassins in flight. They wondered at our good fortune and regretted much that they had lost this only opportunity of rendering service to us. Goodman de Poligny, who could not be silent or keep from showing to everybody his regret for this occurrence, repeatedly said to me that I had ruined him and that this man would in his turn begin proceedings against him. But Madame de Poligny, who was a brave and generous woman, when she heard what had happened, praised me much and thanked me for having in this way broken down the pride and insolence of that assassin.

But Sieur Richard, who was skilled in trickery, went the following night to Grenoble. There he

accused me of having attempted to assassinate him; and he presented a petition to the parliament and, without any other evidence, obtained an order of arrest against me. But I had relatives and friends in the parliament, one of whom, M. de Calignon, a counsellor, sent at once to tell me what had been done, and informed me that a bailiff, with whom he had made it all right, would come to serve the order on me at a time which he stated. So I sent two or three men to waylay the bailiff some leagues from Vaubonnez and forcibly take from him the paper which he was bringing. Our design was to gain time till I could inform the judges of the truth of the affair. As the bailiff had an understanding with us, he, as soon as our men met him, gave up the warrant, proclaiming that violence was offered to him, and he drew up such a report as to help on our game; which delayed matters.

Sieur Richard made a great outcry over this, saying that I had committed an outrage against the parliament. The governor of the province, M. de Lesdiguières wrote me to say that it was reported that I had committed such violent deeds that everybody was complaining about it, and that if I kept on, he should be obliged to use his power as governor

against me. But I wrote him giving him the facts and he answered me that he was glad to know the truth of the affair and that it only increased the esteem in which he had always held my conduct.

But I saw that it was necessary to take proceedings against *Sieur Richard*, and, having learned of many extortions which he had committed in the region, I brought forward all those who had any cause of complaint, and having taken their statements in a legal way presented them to the parliament.

*M. de Calignon*, with *Madame de Poligny* and some other friends of mine, worked powerfully for me and soon brought the matter in a condition to be decided. Then the poor miserable fellow seeing that he had no more hope of escaping by all his artifices from the judgment which was going to be given against him, and seeing nothing before him but the gibbet for his crimes, concluded that the best thing for him to do was to come and throw himself at my feet and submit himself in advance to everything, provided I would save his life.

At first, as I was extremely angry because of the perfidy with which he had already broken the word he had given me, and the extraordinary insolence

with which he had acted afterwards, I could not bring myself to listen to any settlement; and I thought that, for the love of justice and the peace of the country-side, it was absolutely necessary to have him hung. But his continual importunities, added to the extremity to which I saw he was reduced, giving me at last some ground for a hope for better conduct from him in the future, induced me to take gentle means and show mercy to him. And so I told him that, though he had lost his honor by breaking the promise he had given me when he made the same request of me at Paris, I would nevertheless grant him what he did not deserve; but he must first determine upon three things,—he must entirely quit the country, his lands must be sold and the money arising from the sale must pay the expense of legal proceedings.

Richard, who saw that it was better for him to save his life with the loss of his property than to be hung with his purse hanging at his neck, said he was willing to do all, provided his life was saved. So this miserable affair was terminated. His lands were sold. Part of the money paid the expenses. He asked pardon of Madame de Poligny and left the country, where he was never seen afterwards.

Doubtless, it was God who gave me prudence, firmness and perseverance to push this miserable fellow to the wall and break down his insolence. Pride, rage and despair, joined to his activity and cunning, made him capable of every excess. And it was an extraordinary exercise of God's justice, that, being as proud and as cruel as he was, he saw himself at last forced to bend and submit himself to the will of the man whom he wanted to destroy and hated with all his heart.

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### *THE COURAGEOUS PREACHER*

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FATHER GONTIER, a Jesuit priest, preached one day at the church of St. Gervais. King Henry IV, the Marchioness de Vernueil, and the greater part of the ladies of the court were present at the sermon. The ladies usually placed themselves near the pulpit, because there was where the King generally seated himself. Besides the noise of their whispering, the marchioness especially made signs to the King, to make him laugh. Father Gontier stopped in the middle of his sermon and turning to the King,—“Sire,” said he, “will you never weary of coming with a seraglio to hear the word of God, and making so great a scandal in a holy place?”

All the ladies, and the marchioness especially, did all in their power to induce the King to make an example of the indiscreet preacher. The King listened to them but did nothing.

The next day, he went to hear the preacher again, and met him as he was going to the pulpit. Instead

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*Stories from Old French Chronicles*

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of complaining at what the preacher had said the day before, the King assured him that he had nothing to fear, and thanked him for his admonishing, but at the same time he asked him not again to do it publicly.

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### *HENRY IV AND THE ATTORNEYS*

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**I**N this month (November, 1602), there was told in Paris a story about the King (Henry IV) which was pleasant and worthy of remark. The Seigneur de Vitry, who knew about the matter, told it as true to one of my friends. It was as follows:

The King who was hunting in the direction of Grosbois, slipped away from his companions, as he often does, and came alone to Creteil which is a league beyond the Charenton bridge. He got there after dinner time, hungry as a hunter (as they say) and went to the hostelry, and, having found the hostess, asked her if there was not something for a dinner. She told him "No!" and that he had come too late. But he saw, as she spoke, a roast on the spit, and asked for whom the roast was cooking. She told him it was for some men who were upstairs, who, as she thought, were attorneys.

The King (whom she took to be simply a gentleman, because he was alone) asked her to go and say



to them that there was an honorable gentleman who had just arrived and was tired and hungry; and that he asked them to give him a piece of their roast, which he would pay for, or would they let him sit at the end of their table and he would pay his share. They flatly refused his request, saying that, as for their roast, there was none too much for themselves, and as to his dining with them they had business with each other and were very glad to be alone.

The King having heard their answer asked the hostess for a boy whom he could send to a place near by to get him some company; and having given the boy a piece of money, sent him to the Seigneur de Vitry, who lived near, giving himself another name, and sending as a token a great red cap which he sometimes wore, and told the boy to tell him to come at once to the hostelry.

The boy carried the message and de Vitry, perceiving that it came from the King, went at once, accompanied by eight or ten others, and found the King, who told him what had happened and the meanness of the attorneys.

The King told him to go at once and seize them and take them to Grosbois; and that, when he had them there, he should have them well whipped, to

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*Stories from Old French Chronicles*

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teach them to be more courteous to gentlemen another time.

And this the Sieur de Vitry did very promptly and well, in spite of all the reasons, prayers, supplications, remonstrances and contradictions of messieurs, the attorneys.\*

\* The story does not say, but it may well be understood that the King satisfied his hunger with the attorney's roast.

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## *THE POPE AND THE AMBASSADOR*

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**P**OPE PAUL V, complaining to the Venitian ambassador, now (1609) resident in Rome, that there was heretical preaching throughout the city and the seignory of Venice, the ambassador in answer said that the seignory had always been and was orthodox and Catholic, and never would allow anything to be preached in its domains but the Gospel of Christ. The Pope promptly answered, "Don't you know that to preach the Gospel of Christ is to ruin the Catholic faith?"

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## *A TRIAL WITH A SINGULAR EPISODE*

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**C**ARDINAL RICHELIEU had succeeded in defeating the cabal by which the Queen had planned his exclusion from the favor of King Louis XIII, and was in fuller power than before. He sent to the Bastille the Chevalier de Jars, who had been one of the Queen's adherents. It was winter when he was imprisoned, and during the whole of the period of eleven months during which he lay in the dungeon in which he was placed, he had only the velvet suit to wear which he had on when he was arrested.

Eighty times during the eleven months de Jars was subjected to an examination as severe as possible. But he answered always with good sense and firmness, without being tangled on any subject or contradicting himself in his answers, or saying anything embarrassing for anyone. At the end of the eleven months he was brought out to be taken to Troyes, being dealt with as harshly as a man would be who is taken out to his death. Passing through a court,

as he was leaving the Bastille, he saw on a balcony Marshal de Bassompierre and several others, who had also been sent to the Bastille, on the same grounds as he, but who had been treated with more humanity than he, for he did not know where he was going or what was going to happen to him. He turned to them and shouted, "Adieu! I do not know where I am going. But you may be sure, whatever happens to me, that I am a man of honor, and that I shall never fail my friends or myself."

At Troyes, Laffemas, who was called the cardinal's executioner, and who had already been the tormenter of de Jars in the Bastille, was appointed to be his judge; and there were joined with Laffemas a sufficient number of men who were no more honest than he, to take and carry on the proceeding. Laffemas worked at the case in all the ways which are known to that kind of men, and he was well seconded by the others. They tried to buy false witnesses against de Jars; but de L'Ile, the provost, who had accompanied him from Paris to Troyes, and whom they wanted to have say that on the way he had discoursed against the state, would not take part in their malice and absolutely refused to say so.

Laffemas knew what was secretly in the cardinal's mind, which was not to have the chevalier put to death, for he knew he was innocent and there was no reasonable ground to condemn him; but he hoped, by fear, by suffering and the apparent certainty of death, to get from him the secrets of the intrigue of the Queen, Madame de Chevreuse, and the keeper of the seals, Chateaufort, against himself. Laffemas had promised the minister that he would torment de Jars so that he would get out of him about all the cardinal wanted to know; and that on a small foundation of evil he would find means to carry on the proceeding against him, in accordance with the ways of the cardinal who, as I have heard his friends relate, used to say that with two lines of a man's handwriting, though he was innocent, a proceeding against him could be successfully carried through, because the matters could be so fixed about that as a foundation, that whatever was wanted could be found. In that way Laffemas carried on the proceeding against de Jars. He threatened him, he interrogated him, and did everything that a base soul is capable of doing.

One day, which was the feast of All Saints, this

wicked judge, wishing to show the innocent criminal that he had some kind feeling for him, allowed him to attend mass. He was brought by a band of archers and under a good guard to the church of the Jacobins. While there, he saw Laffemas and his wife come forward to take the communion at the high altar; and he, fearing nothing and always intent on his own affairs, when he saw that that man had received the holy Sacrament, all at once escaped from his guards and rushed at Laffemas and caught him by the throat, saying that, as he had between his lips his God and his living Creator, it was time for him to tell the truth and justify him (de Jars) before God and men, and to declare that he was innocent and that it was an injustice to persecute him; adding that, as Laffemas was making a show of being a Christian, he ought at once to surrender to the truth; that he was a scoundrel and he therefore refused to have him for his judge; he called on the bystanders to witness that he refused him.

The people gathered around them at the noise, and all began to murmur against the unjust judge. De L'Ile, the provost, who was one of them, tried to separate the two, but de Jars would not quit the man, insisting upon an answer. Laffemas at last

answered coldly, "Sir, do not complain! I assure you that the cardinal loves you." De Jars insisted that he should answer on the point of his innocence; and at last Laffemas said he (de Jars) would get off with being sent to Italy, but he would like to show him some small letters written by him, which would show that he was more guilty than he pretended. The chevalier did not understand a word of what Laffemas had said, but in utter astonishment let go of him and was taken back to his prison. He saw that the proceeding against him was being actively pressed and considered himself as good as dead; but he determined to maintain his courage and do what an honorable man ought to do. He was brought again before the tribunal, where he boldly refused to accept Laffemas as his judge, charged him with all his baseness, called him a scoundrel a second time, and told the other judges what promise Laffemas had given the cardinal against him. He was interrogated all over again for three hours, but he defended himself so courageously that those, who had wanted to destroy him and planned at least to make him betray his friends, were confounded. When he was being taken away, de L'Ile, the provost, came to him and said, "Be of



good courage, sir, I have good hope for you, for they have ordered me to take you back to the same prison; and it is usual to take those, whom they are going to condemn to death, to another place." The chevalier answered him in the same tone in which he used to speak as to things which he did not agree with, "My friend! those gallows birds are going to condemn me. I see that by their looks. I must have patience, and the cardinal will be in a rage to see that I laugh at him and his tortures." As soon as he had left the room, Laffemas showed the other judges a letter from the cardinal, or rather from the King which said, "If he is condemned to a small punishment show him the sentence, but do not give it to him. If he is condemned to death, suspend the execution." The judges condemned him to death, and he was brought to the scaffold. He showed himself there to be a man of courage and honor. He sneered at his judges and his enemies, and met the approach of death with great firmness. As the executioner was ready to strike the beheading blow, his pardon was brought to him. He said afterwards that his suffering was great, but that God had shown him great favor and that he had recognized by experience that God had a care for his

creatures. And after the death of Cardinal Richelieu he said he owed his life to the cardinal, for if the cardinal had wished it, the judges would have put him to death.







